

THE MOST REASONABLE OF UNREASONABLE MEN:
EISENHOWER AS STRATEGIC GENERAL

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Strategy and Military History

by

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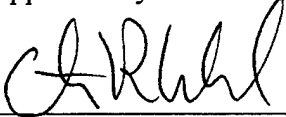
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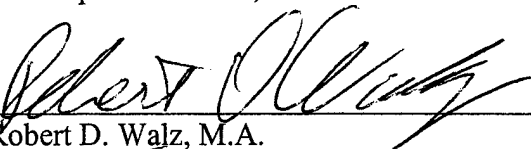
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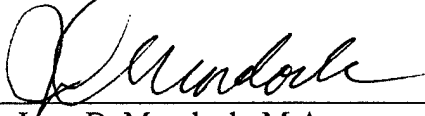
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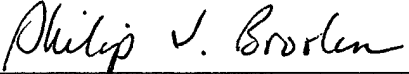
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ABSTRACT

THE MOST REASONABLE OF UNREASONABLE MEN: EISENHOWER AS STRATEGIC GENERAL by LCDR Todd A. Kiefer, USN, 135 pages.

This paper investigates General Dwight D. Eisenhower's roles as strategist and strategic general during World War II. Eisenhower had zero combat experience and was still a colonel on the Army rolls when selected for four-star unified command. Yet, he fought and won the war in Europe on his own terms. He designed his own chain of command, drafted the terms for Allied cooperation and strategy, built the Allied command structure, disobeyed heads of state, engaged in military diplomacy with political enemies, and enforced his personal morality upon an entire theater of war. He was the field commander for four great campaigns including the first Allied effort in North Africa and the final drive from the English Channel to the Elbe. In his humble and disarming way, Eisenhower was the most unreasonable general of all time.

This study concludes that Eisenhower was an unconventional military thinker whose success as strategic general was due primarily to his capacity for progressive and creative vision. His extraordinary personal energy, initiative, creativity, and integrity enabled him to translate his unique vision into reality.

To Michelle

PREFACE

Twelve months ago I looked at the world through different eyes. My vision was largely filtered by service parochialism and the specialization required of being a naval aviator. No international exchange officer could have felt more out of place than myself as a khaki-clad Annapolis grad adrift in a green sea of BDUs and jungle boots at the Army Command and General Staff College. A thin veneer of jointness could not disguise the Army history and tradition, which are the heartwood of this institution. Strangely enough, it proved to be the perfect prescription for this fish out of water. Here I was exposed to a new spectrum of ideas—interpretations of the past, predictions of the future, commentaries on the present—which kindled in me a previously unknown interest in military history and strategic studies. The disciplined structure of the Master of Military Art and Science program and the diversity of the elective courses afforded me the avenues to pursue this interest. Though not completely reformed, I think I can safely say that my year at Fort Leavenworth has expanded my field of view, pushed outward the horizon of my knowledge, and demonstrated to me the merits of inter-service cooperation.

I count it a privilege to have been afforded a full year to focus exclusively on advancing my professional military education. I undertook the writing of a thesis partly out of a sense of obligation to make the most of that opportunity. With so little foundation, it is sure I would not have gotten far without some help and encouragement. I would like to thank Mr. James Leyerzapf and Mr. David Haight of the Eisenhower

Library for their assistance in my research and letting me make those final ten photocopies. I am indebted to Colonel J. D. Morelock for furnishing me with his book, *Generals of the Ardennes*. I would like to thank Mr. Bob Walz for his kind words, for setting me straight on matters of strategy, and for pointing me to critical resources. I am especially grateful to my committee chairman Dr. Christopher Gabel for taking such an unpromising case under his wing, for sharing his expertise (and opinions) on World War II, and for not pulling the plug on the whole enterprise when I was hopelessly behind at Christmas. It was his enumeration of the odds against my success that spurred me on to prove him wrong.

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The personality of the general is indispensable; he is the head, he is the all of an army.
The Gauls were not conquered by the Roman legions, but by Caesar.

Napoleon, *Memoirs écrits à Sainte-Helène*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.¹

George Bernard Shaw

The Evolution of Strategic Generalship

The nature and role of the strategic military leader have evolved considerably in the twentieth century. In previous centuries, a single individual with absolute military authority conceived and orchestrated each battle and campaign. It was certainly true through the Napoleonic era that “the general was the plan,”² and his wounding, capture, or death ended the conflict. However, the rising tide of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries empowered governments to press greater and greater proportions of their populations into military service and to mobilize civilian institutions and industries for war. This new type of war cut deeper into the soul of the nation and tended to have a life of its own independent of the generals who planned it or presided over its military dimension.

World War I saw the first full incarnation of Carl von Clausewitz’s concept of total warfare, with belligerents fully mobilizing their manpower and economic resources

¹George Bernard Shaw, quoted in Stephen L. Spanoudis, ed., *Quotations* [database on-line]; available from <http://www.geocities.com/~spanoudi/quote.html>; Internet; accessed 26 September 1998.

²J. F. C. Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War* (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Publishing Co., 1926), 5.

in an effort to break the military stalemate. The new landscape of war—with its increasing spectrum and lethality of weapons, the emergence of grand alliances and coalitions, and the extension of the battlefield into the civilian sector—placed new demands on the highest levels of military leadership, which extended far outside the historical sphere of military responsibility. Generals were forced to consider political, informational, and economic factors in their strategic calculations. They were also compelled to operate further to the rear and to depend on staffs to collect, process, and disseminate the information required to guide their huge military machines. The early stalemate in the Great War proved that the generals on both sides of the conflict had entered the fight with a faulty vision of the tactical, operational, and strategic methods required to win; the years of indecisive battles proved that they were unwilling or unable to rapidly change their methods and adapt to the new circumstances.

By the outbreak of World War II, the magnitude of the demands of modern warfare on the strategic general was better appreciated, even if the specifics were still not well understood. To cope with the tremendous responsibility, the Allies adopted the concept of the unified commander—a single individual with the authority to coordinate joint and combined military forces with the diplomatic and interagency efforts within a theater of operations. Except for emergency measures under General Ferdinand Foch in 1918, this concept had never been tried before in coalition warfare. The name of the first man elevated to the position of unified command—a combat veteran with impeccable

military credentials—passed quickly into obscurity along with his ill-fated command.³

The name of the second—a 16-year major in the U.S. Army who lacked combat experience and was nearly forcibly retired—is today a household word in many countries. The name, of course, is Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The Case for Eisenhower

Some historians and biographers have characterized Eisenhower as a figurehead—a leader without real command authority—who gained his coveted positions more by country boy charm than ability. In their view, Eisenhower was largely inconsequential to the Allied victory in World War II—a victory they believe would have eventually come regardless of who sat behind the desk in Algiers or Versailles. While this argument may be valid in its crudest sense in that the economies of the Allies would have eventually gained an insurmountable advantage over the Axis, it fails when examined in detail.

Lao Tse once observed, “When the effective leader is done with his work, the people say it happened naturally.”⁴ Such is the case with General Eisenhower. Never before had a military commander been asked to accomplish a task of such magnitude as the conquest of Western Europe with such disparate forces and with such little real authority. What is more, Eisenhower's prescribed endstate was not a negotiated peace,

³Wavell and the Australian-British-Dutch-American Command (ABDA) in Southwest Pacific in World War II. E. K. G. Sixsmith, *Military Commanders: Eisenhower* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Publishing, 1973), 1, 19.

⁴Spanoudis, *Quotations*.

but the enemy's "unconditional surrender"—a term that served great rhetorical purposes, but was never defined in either military or political terms.⁵ No one prior to World War II had ever held joint command of ground, air, and naval forces. No American had ever directed the combined forces of allied nations. Contemporary coalition commands that were formed in the Pacific, Middle East, and Southwest Asia were much less complex. They were generally focused exclusively on either land or sea operations, and all were much smaller. Eisenhower's massive unified command of joint and multinational forces was unparalleled in the war by either the Allies or the Axis.⁶

It is highly doubtful that anyone other than Eisenhower could have achieved victory on the terms he did, sustaining Allied unity and resolve through four bitter campaigns, and building a level of cooperation and trust with the Soviets that allowed him to compel a simultaneous German surrender on both fronts. What is more, Eisenhower did what General George C. Marshall and Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, the principal candidates for his ultimate command, could not or would not have done—establish himself as a true field commander who maintained real operational control of land and air combat forces at his headquarters.

Eisenhower's success is even more remarkable in light of the tenuous nature of his authority, dependent as it was on the political goodwill of two independent heads of

⁵Michael D. Pearlman, *Unconditional Surrender, Demobilization, and the Atomic Bomb* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1996), 1.

⁶Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, Alfred D. Chandler Jr., Stephen E. Ambrose et al., eds. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 1:xix-xx (hereafter cited as Eisenhower, *Papers*).

state with conflicting strategic objectives. His two principal constituent nations, the United Kingdom and the United States, being democracies and fighting on foreign soil, never mustered the same absolute commitment to this war of annihilation as their totalitarian opponent, Germany, who clearly saw national survival in the balance.

Churchill was gun-shy from British disasters on the continent earlier in the war and earlier in the century, and wanted to fight the Germans anywhere in the world but on the continent itself. The American public, reluctant to enter the war in the first place, was a somewhat fickle crowd, which felt more urgency for the struggle in the Pacific because of Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt's continued commitment to the primacy of the European theater of war was subject to political override should operations go sour and casualties reach levels unacceptable to his constituency.

Eisenhower's accomplishments far exceeded his rank and authority. It was Eisenhower who sold the Alliance on the concept of unified command during the early ARCADIA meetings and Eisenhower who wrote the very job description he later filled as commander of the European Theater of Operations. He drafted the terms for Anglo-American cooperation and the first series of war plans. As war planner and field commander, he influenced grand strategy through his influence with the heads of state and through his decisive actions when they could not agree. He built a unified coalition command structure and imposed his particular brand of morality upon his subordinates. He directed four campaigns and six armies in the field. He wrote the very terms of Germany's surrender, and he cultivated a lasting Anglo-American friendship that would endure for another generation.

What was it that uniquely suited Eisenhower to the role of strategic general?

What leadership ability allowed him to exercise effective command and control over his broad array of military forces? What quality of personality earned him the trust and cooperation of heads of state, the Vichy French, the Soviets, occupied nations, liberated nations, diplomats, interagency representatives, and the press?

Definitions and Delimitations

Major General Richard A. Chilcoat, former Commandant of the Army War College, has divided strategic art into three distinct disciplines: strategic theory, strategic practice, and strategic leadership.⁷ Strategic theory concerns itself with the development of national military and security strategies: strategic practice with the execution of these strategies using the political, economic, military, and informational instruments of national power. The strategic leader, standing astride theory and execution, guides both by succinctly articulating the vision and inspiring peers and subordinates to follow it. Eisenhower played all three roles. He was a strategic theorist developing courses of action in his position on Marshall's war plans staff. He was a strategic practitioner carrying out those courses of action while commanding Allied forces in four campaigns. He was a strategic leader in both positions as he used the power of his personality and the pen to sway others to his own strategic vision for winning the war.

⁷Richard A. Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute), 1995, iii.

Modern military taxonomy evolved during World War II. General Marshall coined the term "theater of war" for global regions of conflict with distinct national objectives.⁸ The Allies divided up the world into three theaters of war: the Pacific (a U.S. responsibility), the Middle and Far East (a British responsibility), and the European (a combined responsibility).⁹ Within the European theater of war were several theaters of operations: the Atlantic theater, the North African theater, the Mediterranean theater, the Italian theater, and the European theater. Eisenhower lead joint and multinational campaigns in support of Allied strategic interests within four out of five of these theaters of operations. While the nature of warfare has continued to evolve (and devolve) since he held his position as unified commander, Eisenhower's tenure still stands as the high water mark of field command. His initial assignment as Commander in Chief of Allied Forces for Operation TORCH in North Africa was a close parallel to today's combined task force commander. But, his stature and responsibilities grew with each successive campaign. In his ultimate role as Supreme Allied Commander for the climactic invasion of France, he was responsible for all Allied coordination in the European theater of war, and had the geographic responsibilities of a modern regional unified Commander-in-Chief. Needless to say, the array of forces at his command was vastly superior in number.

⁸Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:176.

⁹Sixsmith, 19; and Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:174-75.

To further delimit Eisenhower's role, it is essential to understand the concept of the levels of war: tactical, operational, and strategic. Each level may be prosecuted by individual, joint, or combined military forces. The tactical level comprises individual battles and engagements and is generally fought by units of corps size and smaller. The tactical general's art is the *application* of available military resources to the immediate problem at hand to achieve a battlefield objective. The operational level comprises major operations and campaigns and is fought by armies, fleets, and numbered air forces. The operational general's art is the *distribution* of available military resources within an area or theater of operations to control the circumstances (time, place, relative strength, and duration) of a series of tactical battles and thereby to achieve a theater objective.

The strategic level comprises a nation's total military involvement in a conflict and its entire military force. Nations with global interests and with a national military strategy that varies by region may have an intermediary theater-strategic level that allows for subdividing the collective national military strategy into its regional components. The U.S. in World War II had distinct theater-strategic objectives for the European theater of war and the Pacific theater of war. Grand strategy transcends the military levels of war. It embraces all of the nation's instruments of power (military, diplomatic, economic, and informational) in the pursuit of the overarching national security strategy. Joint Publication 1-02 defines the strategic level of war as "the level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to

accomplish these objectives.”¹⁰ The words “determine” and “develop” hint at the unique nature of the strategic level, for it is only at this level that the military leader is obligated to innovate and *create*.

The Creative Element

It is essential to understand the importance of the creative aspect of strategic generalship in order to interpret Eisenhower’s success. Marshall and Eisenhower were twin architects of the victory in Europe. Marshall’s creative role was the construction and sustainment of the war machine itself—the induction, training and equipping of U.S. soldiers and airmen, and the supply of materiel to the Allies. Eisenhower’s creative role was the design, construction, and exercise of the command structure that harnessed the U.S. and British war machines together with those of the other Allies into an effective team. Eisenhower supplied the mind and soul for the monster of manpower and materiel that Marshall had built.

The creative mind is required when searching out the new solution to the new problem. The strategic general’s art is the anticipation of the military requirements of national security, the creation of the requisite military forces, and the instillation within those forces of the will and ability to fight. The strategic general must create military strategy and doctrine, must shepherd the research, development and acquisition process for new materiel, must manage the evolutionary training of personnel, must guide the

¹⁰Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1-02: *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Joint Staff (J-7), 23 March 1994), 397.

mobilization process, must construct command and control structures, and must inspirationally lead men in order to fight and win the war.

Literature Survey

There are volumes of primary documents and a library of secondary sources rich in information on General Eisenhower's thoughts and actions during the period of interest: from his appointment to Marshall's staff in December 1941 through the victory over Germany in May of 1945. Chief among the primary sources is the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas. Many of its items of personal and official correspondence are compiled in Johns Hopkins University's five-volume *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower* edited by Alfred Chandler and Stephen Ambrose. Ike's contemporaneous letters to his wife published by his son John S. D. Eisenhower in *Letters to Mamie* also shed light on what was going on in his mind as he carried these heavy burdens of responsibility. Selections from his diaries are also very revealing. Of the hundreds of biographies and other secondary sources of information, three taken together provide a balanced view of his achievements: Ambrose's *Eisenhower*, E. K. G. Sixsmith's *Eisenhower*, and David Eisenhower's *Eisenhower: At War 1943-1945*. Stephen E. Ambrose is Eisenhower's principal biographer. Sixsmith, a Britisher, paints a picture more sympathetic to the English point of view and Montgomery. David Eisenhower offers an interpretation of his grandfather that benefits from knowledge of the unofficial side of his life as well as the official record. A critical reading of Dwight Eisenhower's semi-autobiographical *Crusade in Europe* and *At Ease: Stories I Tell to*

Friends reveal some of his philosophical underpinnings and self-assessments at various stages of the war.

It is clear from even a cursory study of the literature that Eisenhower possessed conventional military leadership skills. In a December 1942 memo on the subject of selecting officers for high command, penned as Eisenhower was already one month into the TORCH campaign, George Marshall wrote: "Vital qualifications for a general officer are leadership, force, and vigor. Ordinary training, experience, and education cannot compensate for these and the officers who possess them must be singled out and advanced regardless of other considerations."¹¹ Obviously, Marshall must have seen these qualities in Eisenhower before selecting him for his prominent leadership position. But numerous men senior to Eisenhower also possessed such skills. In fact, Ike's previous boss, Lieutenant General Krueger, would seem to be a much more likely candidate for high command. Nine years and two stars senior to Eisenhower in March of 1942, Krueger had joined the Army as a private and fought in the Spanish-American War and World War I. He had attended the Command and General Staff School, the Army War College, and the Navy War College. He had twice served on the War Plans Division (the second time as Chief), had been a member of the Joint Army and Navy Board, and was currently directing an Army in the field.¹² Surely Eisenhower must have

¹¹Robert H. Berlin, *U.S. Army World War II Corps Commanders: A Composite Biography* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1989), 15.

¹²Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:16-17.

demonstrated something truly exceptional to Marshall to have been selected ahead of such men.

The Unreasonable General

When Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall surveyed the world scene in December of 1941 in the wake of Pearl Harbor, he had no reason for optimism about the outcome of the war. The French had capitulated, the British were losing on all fronts, the Axis held the continent of Europe firmly in its grip and had penetrated deep into Russia, and the Pacific theater of war had just opened with a devastating blow to the U.S. Fleet in Pearl Harbor. The one bright spot was that the United States had enjoyed a two-year period from Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939 to mobilize its military. Marshall had striven mightily to build up his puny prewar Army of 190,000 troops to a strength of over 1.5 million trained soldiers.¹³ Concurrently, he had been combing the Army to identify future leaders for the corps- and army-sized units which, until the summer of 1941, had existed only on paper. Prominent in his little black book of names was Colonel (temporary) Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Eisenhower was an atypical Army officer with an atypical career path. Despite his best efforts, he missed a combat role in World War I and was instead relegated to instructor duty at Camp Colt, Pennsylvania, for the infantry's newest weapon, the tank. He was one of the youngest officers to attend the Army Command and General Staff

¹³Christopher R. Gabel, *The U.S. Army GHQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1991), 8.

School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and distinguished himself by graduating first in his class of 245.¹⁴ He then found himself shuttled from one staff position to another in the interwar Army, having direct command of troops for only fourteen months in the next sixteen years until his selection as Allied Commander in 1942.¹⁵ At various times he worked directly for such prominent generals as Fox Conner, John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, and Douglas MacArthur, and received rare exposure to the strategic level of war in several unique positions. Major General Fox Conner specifically mentored him in strategic theory and the art of war during his tour as his executive officer in Panama. Eisenhower traveled to Europe and wrote a guidebook to the war for Pershing's American Battlefield Monuments Commission. He was Assistant Military Advisor to MacArthur in the Philippines and worked with President Quezon on a daily basis in the creation of an indigenous self-defense force from scratch.¹⁶ In his studies at the Army War College and Army Industrial College, and in his staff position for the Assistant Secretary of War, he studied wartime mobilization of the national industrial base.

Eisenhower earned a good name for himself during the Louisiana Maneuvers in September 1941 as Chief of Staff to Lieutenant General Walter Krueger and his newly

¹⁴Mark C. Bender, *Watershed at Leavenworth* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1990), 53.

¹⁵Battalion commander, 24th Infantry, Fort Benning, GA (August 1926-January 1927), and Third Battalion Commander in 15th Infantry Regiment, Fort Lewis, WA (February-November 1940). Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 6-9 (hereafter cited as Eisenhower, *Crusade*); and Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Eisenhower: The Prewar Diaries and Selected Papers, 1905-1941*, Daniel D. Holt and James W. Leyerzapf, eds. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 491, 504 (hereafter cited as Eisenhower, *Diaries*).

¹⁶J. D. Morelock, *Generals of the Ardennes* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1994), 45.

formed Third Army.¹⁷ Members of the press saturated the event and somehow got the word that Ike was the mastermind behind two highly successful attacks in the massive army versus army exercises. His name and photograph were soon circulating in syndicated columns. Shortly after the event, Krueger wrote to Marshall recommending his Chief of Staff for a star. Marshall quickly approved. When the Pacific War erupted on 7 December and Marshall suddenly had need of an expert in the Philippines, his staff immediately agreed on the natural choice. Eisenhower received a mysterious phone call summoning him to Washington on 12 December 1941.¹⁸ He arrived on Sunday the fourteenth and delivered his first strategic briefing to Marshall that very day.

Within six weeks after his arrival, Ike's expertise in the strategic realm had earned him promotion to Chief of the War Plans Division. Four months later he was General Marshall's and President Roosevelt's choice to lead America's first forces into combat in the European Theater. In this position Eisenhower proved to be a master of the strategic and operational arts. He operated with tremendous dexterity at the nexus between national military strategy and field command. The humble Kansas farm boy—whose greatest ambition had once been to be a baseball player,¹⁹ and who never expected to rise above colonelcy in the Army²⁰—was thus plucked from obscurity and set on the path

¹⁷Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 57.

¹⁸Ambrose, 58.

¹⁹Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 2, 76 (hereafter cited as Eisenhower, *At Ease*).

²⁰Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 240.

which would skyrocket him into the military limelight. He would rise from colonel to five-star general in four years. What talents or characteristics explain his rapid ascendance to military stardom?

The Defining Trait

Success at the tactical or operational level of command may not necessarily predict success at the strategic level. It is likely that the strategic general requires a completely different skill set—one that may seem unreasonable to conventional military minds. It is very difficult to contemplate a man of conventional military virtues like General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery or General George S. Patton Jr. as a successful coalition commander. In attempting to impose his will directly on the Allied forces, it is likely that either of these two men would quickly have fractured delicate loyalties and splintered the coalition effort. But under Eisenhower, the coalition not only held together under very trying circumstances, but rolled back the Axis in four campaigns and achieved by military means the political objective of Germany's unconditional surrender. Eisenhower was in some way uniquely fitted to the role of coalition commander.

The modern need for men of Eisenhower's caliber to fill strategic leadership positions is unquestionable. Unfortunately, such individuals do not materialize in every year group of officers. It is unlikely that an officer with Eisenhower's lack of combat and major command experience would stand a chance of rising to flag officer level, let alone strategic command, in today's military. In order to profit from men of his level of leadership in the future, senior leaders must learn to recognize promising junior and

midgrade officers with similar aptitude and make a career path for them which allows for their broad education and grooming without prejudice to their promotion. For this reason it is important to undertake a critical study of the nature, the development, and the fulfillment of Eisenhower's genius for generalship.

Eisenhower operated in four roles during his military career. He was a student, a strategist, a commander, and a moral leader. A study of his development and performance in each of these four roles across his military career reveals a common thread—one personality trait above all others which distinguished him from the rest of the highly skilled officers of his generation—vision.

Eisenhower was a progressive visionary. His vision was broad, clear, unconventional, and flexible. It encompassed the Army, the greater military, coalition warfare, tactics, strategy, military diplomacy, politics, and morality. It was sustained, at the cost of a terrific expenditure of personal energy, by self-education, honest communication, strategic friendships, and first-hand observation. Eisenhower formed his vision by the mentoring of experienced generals, articulated his vision as an Army strategic planner, acted on his vision as Supreme Allied Commander, and inspired others to his follow his vision as moral leader of the Allied crusade in Europe.

This paper will address three primary questions: How did Eisenhower develop his vision? What were the components of his vision? And, how did his vision enable him to succeed as a strategic general?

CHAPTER 2

THE LIFELONG STUDENT

The true general is the creator quite as much as the applier of knowledge.¹

J. F. C. Fuller

A Broad Education

Eisenhower was largely a self-educated man, not that he did not attend public schools or benefit from teachers, but rather that his accumulation of knowledge was undertaken on his own initiative. Beginning in elementary school, he pursued some subjects with extraordinary diligence, while neglecting others. As a soldier, his curiosity and relentless quest for knowledge led him to explore military subjects in much more depth than most of his contemporaries and to broaden his education with nonmilitary subjects. Eisenhower studied military history, theory, and tactics on his own initiative. He also conducted and witnessed field experiments on the tank, amphibious warfare, and airpower before reporting to Marshall in 1941. He worked as military advisor to the president of the Philippines, studied the mobilization potential of U.S. industry and infrastructure, and worked on the staffs of three generals (including two Army Chiefs of Staff).

¹J. F. C. Fuller, *Generalship: Its Diseases and Their Cure* (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Publishing Co., 1936), 78.

The most seminal period of his education was 2 ½ years of personal mentoring by Major General Fox Conner in Panama from 1922 to 1924. Eisenhower always responded much better to human example than formal instruction. His initiative was goaded rather than hobbled by Conner's inspirational style. In Panama, he added ancient and modern philosophy to his bill of education. Also instilled within him at this time was an undying commitment to the concept of unity of command. It was also most likely here that Eisenhower's vision—fed, watered, and pruned by Conner—matured into a workable model for the future.

A Difficult Pupil

Eisenhower was a lifelong student, but on his own terms. He did not apply himself equally to all subjects in his formal schooling, so his academic record is mixed. However, he attacked those subjects that interested him with incredible energy and an active investigative spirit. He studied subjects and authors far outside the cognizance of the typical military officer, as well as mastering conventional martial subjects. He soaked up information like a sponge and was able to collate the flood of incoming facts into a coherent and consistent macroscopic vision of the world. Equally important, he maintained a flexible mind-set, which embraced change rather than rejected it.

The earliest seeds of Eisenhower's vision for warfare were planted near the turn of the century in Abilene, Kansas. As a young boy, there was one subject that especially fascinated him—ancient military history. Eisenhower was intrigued by accounts of great historical battles and their captains. Hannibal was a particular favorite. In fact, Ike's

mother was forced to lock his history books in a closet to help focus his studies on his core academic subjects. The enterprising young Eisenhower found the key, and thereafter waged a secret campaign to continue his study of history's great battles.²

Eisenhower's tendency toward nonconformity and even aloofness is evident in his academic performance. His basic intelligence cannot be doubted from the quality of his work and from the reasoning abilities he demonstrated as an adult. But he did not take his formal schooling as seriously as his instructors would have liked. He had a perspective that was much more adult than his peers, and he took school on his own terms. He eschewed subjects that he found uninteresting or that were characterized by rote memorization. However, he vigorously applied himself to subjects that interested him. When he decided on attending a military academy, he embarked on a two-year regimen of self-preparation in academics and athletics and passed the West Point entrance exam handily. He waged his own letter writing campaign to earn himself the endorsements of prominent local people and the eventual senatorial nomination.³

At West Point, Eisenhower continued his contrary academic approach. He viewed with disdain the Academy's legalistic approach to discipline and his classmates "haunted by fear of demerits and low grades."⁴ His refusal to take the disciplinary system as seriously as it was intended resulted in his accumulation of an impressive tally

²Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 39.

³Bender, 11-12.

⁴Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 12.

of demerits.⁵ Disliking the manner of his instructor in integral calculus, Ike was less than diligent with his homework as well, and he chose to rely more on his own reasoning ability and follow his own methods in attacking problems. In fumbling to solve a problem at the chalkboard one day when he had neglected in his homework, Ike discovered a unique solution, which angered his instructor, but pleased the mathematics department.⁶ His final report card for the class acknowledged that his performance had been "very good," but that he "should be assigned to an organization under a strict Commanding Officer."⁷

Though dreadfully disappointed at missing combat action in World War I (despite his direct appeal to the War Department), Eisenhower was given an even more rewarding opportunity to enrich his education and broaden his vision. Immediately after the end of the war, Eisenhower assumed command of Camp Colt in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. With the rank of temporary lieutenant colonel, Eisenhower was responsible for the mobilization and training of over 10,000 men. This level of authority far surpassed that of the company or battalion command he would have had in Europe. In learning to cope with the myriad problems of running this "Army in microcosm," Eisenhower learned several lessons that served him well as a strategic general.⁸ He learned to identify able subordinates, to place them in key positions, and to provide them with increased

⁵Bender, 12.

⁶Bender, 15.

⁷Bender, 15

⁸Bender, 19-20.

authority. He learned how to build and sustain the morale of his subordinates. And he developed some political savvy after working through a Congressional Inquiry.

Apprentice

During his formative early years in the Army, Eisenhower was fortunate enough to serve under one of the Army's great intellectuals of the interwar period, General Fox Connor. Ike described his three-year tour in Panama under Conner as a "sort of graduate school in military affairs and the humanities"⁹ where the general drilled him in staff officer duties, directed him in an extensive professional reading program, and engaged him in weighty discussions of policy and strategy. During that time Eisenhower's love for history was rekindled. During his time there he read Plato, Tacitus, and Nietzsche as well as more typical fare, such as Clausewitz and Jomini.¹⁰ Fox Conner predicted the coalition nature of the coming war and first ingrained in Eisenhower the need for unity of command. Conner also instilled in Eisenhower a respect for a man he himself greatly admired, George C. Marshall. Eisenhower explained his responsibility in the mentoring process:

Always try to associate yourself closely with and learn as much as you can from those who know more than you, who do better than you, who see more clearly than you. Don't be afraid to reach upward. Apart from the rewards of friendship, the association might pay off at some unforeseen time—that is only an accidental byproduct. The important thing is that the learning will make you a better person.¹¹

⁹Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 187.

¹⁰Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 187.

¹¹Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 199.

Fox Conner's mentoring and Eisenhower's studious diligence soon paid off at Fort Leavenworth.

Conner's final contribution to Eisenhower's career was the arrangement of an appointment to the Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.¹² He wrote to Eisenhower to calm his former pupil's misgivings about his qualifications for the demanding course:

You may not know it, but because of your three years' work in Panama, you are far better trained and ready for Leavenworth than anybody I know.

You will recall that during your entire service with me I required that you write a field order for the operation of the post every day for the years you were there. You became so well acquainted with the technics [*sic*] and routine of preparing plans and orders for operations that included their logistics, that they will be second nature to you. You will feel no sense of inferiority.¹³

In truth, Eisenhower was very well prepared for Leavenworth. His studies under Conner and his years of instructor duty dovetailed nicely with the core curriculum of the school at the time. Ike especially excelled in the tactical problem-solving exercises, staff and logistics planning functions, and leadership training. Eisenhower was the honor graduate of the class of 1926.¹⁴ He outperformed 244 other students who generally held one or more advantages over him in the areas of seniority, formal military schooling, and combat experience. After this achievement, his name became well known throughout the Army, and he began an involuntary fifteen-year quickening as a career staff officer.

¹²Bender, 39.

¹³Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 201.

¹⁴Bender, 53.

World War I

The first general to snag Eisenhower for a staff position following Leavenworth was Pershing. Six months after graduation, Eisenhower was assigned to the American Battle Monuments Commission. This commission, chaired by General Pershing, was tasked with writing the history of America's participation in World War I. During this unusual assignment, Eisenhower wore civilian clothes and made an extended trip to France. He also was permitted a one-year hiatus to attend the Army War College, which complemented Leavenworth's tactical focus with one more strategic. Eisenhower built his own vision of the war and a strong opinion of the way in which to tell it.

Marshall's first introduction to Eisenhower occurred during this tour of duty. Eisenhower found the accepted narrative format of military histories to be too dry. Instead, with the help of his journalist brother Milton, he worked up a more cohesive and flowing account of the American operations in St. Mihiel and the Argonne that was no less faithful to the facts.¹⁵ Pershing was pleased and took Eisenhower and his draft to then Colonel George C. Marshall. This was the first direct contact between the two who would eventually work so closely together. Here, Marshall first experienced Eisenhower's vision, initiative, and tendency to leave the bounds of his assigned responsibility. Interestingly, Marshall preferred the more conventional form and rejected Eisenhower's modifications. The battles of World War I were not the only things that Eisenhower would dissect, analyze, and assimilate into his overarching vision.

¹⁵Sixsmith, 7.

The Tank

Long before Guderian's panzers sliced through France and shocked the world in 1940, Eisenhower was firmly convinced of the efficacy of armor in both an independent exploitative role and in a support role for conventional ground combat forces. He had come to this vision by personal experience and experimentation undertaken on his own initiative between 1918 and 1921 while serving in various capacities at Camp Meade and Camp Colt.

The tank was a recent innovation in 1918 and was still quite rare on the battlefield. By the war's end, U.S. doctrine relegated the tank to pure support of the infantry, with little emphasis on pursuit and exploitation. Not satisfied that the use of the tank had yet been properly explored, Eisenhower and his new friend Colonel George Patton conceived and conducted a program of unofficial experiments on tank mobility and firepower.¹⁶ They conducted sustained firings of the guns to measure the effect on accuracy. They ran the tanks through various obstacles and tested their capability to tow each other out of mud and rivers. In their zeal to unlock its secrets, they even enlisted the help of a mechanic to completely disassemble and reassemble a tank in working order. Based on their results, they developed new solutions to classic Leavenworth tactics problems using the tank. In 1920, Eisenhower's innovative thoughts on the tank were immortalized in an article for the *Infantry Journal*. Interestingly, his work earned him a

¹⁶Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 170.

rebuke and threat of court-martial from the Chief of Infantry for its departure from established doctrine.¹⁷

Eisenhower's vision of the capabilities and limitations of the tank explain key decisions he later made as field commander. In North Africa, after traveling to the front and observing the impassable mud which mired his tanks first hand, Eisenhower halted the winter drive to Tunis on Christmas Eve of 1943 despite great political pressure to press the offensive. He continued to inspect the American defensive positions during the next two months.

On a trip to the front immediately following the Casablanca conference, Eisenhower was amazed to find that the II Corps forces in the vicinity of the Faid Pass had built no defensive positions and had sown no mines. Ike had already learned these lessons from Rommel and had been passing them down to his subordinate commanders. He gave immediate verbal instructions to lay a minefield and departed for his headquarters to write orders to consolidate II Corps into a defensible posture. Unknown to the Americans, a bold attack by Rommel was already underway. His Afrika Korps, in the opening salvo of what came to be known as the battle of Kasserine Pass, smashed the very unit Eisenhower had visited only two hours after his departure.¹⁸

Major General Lloyd R. Fredendall, the II Corps commander, compounded his errors several days later. Eisenhower had correctly calculated that Rommel's supply

¹⁷Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 173.

¹⁸Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 262.

lines were stretched to the limit and anticipating his retreat, ordered a counterattack to exploit his vulnerability. Fredendall, expecting one more German thrust, refused. Thus, Rommel was allowed to withdraw unscathed. Eisenhower privately expressed his regret at not having given command of II Corps to Patton, and, after some soul-searching, made his first wartime relief of a subordinate. He replaced the hapless Fredendall with one he knew shared his vision for the tank.¹⁹

Interestingly, the Germans recognized Eisenhower as “an expert on operations of armored formations” in their intelligence briefings.²⁰ They were right to respect him. His vision for the exploitative capacity of the tank gave him confidence, later in the war, to allow Patton’s Third Army to accept risk to its flanks and chase the Germans out of France in 15 days of lightning pursuit which mirrored the 1940 blitzkrieg.

Amphibious Warfare

Eisenhower’s initiative in exploring new military concepts also extended to amphibious warfare. On his first visit to Britain in May 1942 he befriended Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten and observed amphibious landing practice training being conducted by his new friend.²¹ His first-hand observations shaped his vision for amphibious operations and convinced him of three governing principals: that the initial

¹⁹Harry C. Butcher, *Butcher Diaries*, A-250, Eisenhower Library (hereafter cited as *Butcher Diaries*).

²⁰Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command, The United States Army World War II: European Theater of Operations* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1954), 34.

²¹Ambrose, 69-70.

waves of troops in must be specially trained in amphibious procedures and cover a front large enough to keep the enemy from immediately focusing his defenses; that land and sea forces must train together to achieve the close coordination required for success; that the weather could make or break an amphibious operation.

Eisenhower took positive steps to address each of these issues. He agreed with Lord Mountbatten on the need for specially trained regimental landing teams to go ashore in the initial assault waves, and assigned Lucian Truscott to become America's expert on the subject.²² He highlighted the need for landing craft and organized massive naval support for each of his amphibious operations. He augmented his amphibious forces with airborne troops. He enforced a practice that he set in operation in 1942 with Patton, Truscott, and Vice-Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, which required close planning and training between the land and sea component commanders in advance of each amphibious operation. Truscott's regimental combat team was one of the few of the entire operation to practice night landings.²³ Significantly, America's first battle of the war, an amphibious operation by untested troops without the benefit of reliable military intelligence against an essentially unknown enemy, was accomplished on schedule. Casablanca surrendered on D+3 after a bitter fight. But the Americans suffered only 1200 casualties to a force of 34,500 men.²⁴ Eisenhower also set about to make himself

²²Sixsmith, 29-30.

²³Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 422.

²⁴D'Este, 431, 439.

smart about meteorology.²⁵ Both in Sicily and in Normandy, marginal weather forced him to make an agonizing decision between execution and delay. In both cases he made the correct one.

Airpower

Eisenhower grew up in an Army with an integral air arm, and his thinking on the use of airpower reveals an institutional bias toward close integration. But he also shaped his vision by proactively exploring aviation. In 1915 he put in for a transfer to the new Aviation Section and was accepted; but he withdrew after objections from his fiancé's parents.²⁶ During his tenure on MacArthur's staff in the Philippines, Ike's role was to develop the proper force structure for an indigenous Filipino self-defense force. Though initially he was opposed on the basis of cost, his study of the problem eventually forced him to the conclusion that a small air force was essential to a nation composed of 7,000 islands. While in the Philippines, he took up flying and earned a pilot's license at the age of 46.²⁷

In the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1941, he observed the synergy of aircraft in support of ground forces—a lesson he carried with him throughout the war. He also participated in the testing of small, lightweight aircraft for observation, artillery spotting, and liaison. He was very impressed with the utility of the Piper Cub planes and later

²⁵Pogue, *Supreme Command*, 168.

²⁶Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 117-18.

²⁷Eisenhower, *Diaries*, 491.

argued their advantages before the War Department in a successful bid to have them added to the equipment of every division.²⁸

Industry and Infrastructure

Not confining himself to the military sphere, Eisenhower's investigations also extended into civilian infrastructure and industrial production. In 1919 he revealed his inquisitive and experimental spirit by volunteering to be the Tank Corps observer for the first Transcontinental Motor Convoy, an Army experiment to test the concept of motorization. His sixty-one-day odyssey from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco averaged only about fifty miles per day due to poor roads and the fragility of the trucks. Eisenhower wrote a detailed report at the end of the trip summarizing his observations. His memory of this trip, combined with his later observations of the German autobahn, was most likely the spur for his Presidential proposal of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways more than thirty years later.²⁹ It also influenced his thinking on the invasion of France.

American mobilization for World War II was ultimately halted at 90 divisions instead of the 215 predicted by early planners to be needed to defeat Germany on the Western front.³⁰ However, these divisions were highly motorized in contrast to a preponderance of static divisions in the German Army. Eisenhower's insistence on a

²⁸Eisenhower, *Crusade*, 12.

²⁹Eisenhower, *Diaries*, 24.

³⁰Morelock, 59.

cross-channel attack was partly based on his knowledge of the east-west road network in northern France picked up during his tour of duty there in 1927. His broad front strategy for advancing on Germany recognized the macroscopic reality that he would need to use every paved avenue of approach to push six armies across Europe and into Germany.

While serving on the staff of the Assistant Secretary of War in the early thirties, Eisenhower worked with the former Chief of the War Industries Board Bernard Baruch in developing an industrial mobilization plan for the United States. Ike toured American factories and workshops, investigating the country's capacity to mobilize for war. The result was a revealing study on the current capabilities and shortcomings of American industry and a plan for future mobilization. While various experts debated the merits of the sweeping economic controls he advocated, all, including the members of the General Staff, realized it was a valuable work in an area that merited further study. A consequence for the military was the establishment of the Industrial College of the Army, which Ike was soon to attend.

As a consequence of his studies, Eisenhower developed a personal strategic concept of competing "productive potentials" which figured highly in his later strategic planning work for Marshall.³¹ He realized that the fall of Britain or Russia or the gain of India in the Pacific would tip the scales of production in favor of the Axis and put Allied victory forever out of reach. His future strategy memorandum in March of 1942 would frame the war in terms of economics. While the primacy of economic and logistic

³¹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:205-208.

limitations in strategic planning is well understood in today's force projection military, Eisenhower's contemporaries did not see them as decisive factors for victory. Patton articulately expressed the more common view more palatable to the fighting man: "There is a regrettable and widespread belief among civilians and in the Army that we will win this war through materiel. In my opinion we will only win this war through blood, sacrifice, and high courage."³² On the other hand, the Army Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur, liked Eisenhower's creative thinking in this project so much that he invited him to join his staff.³³ He continued to be so impressed with his work that he would not let him go for the next seven years.

Unity of Command

Perhaps the most decisive contribution Eisenhower made to the Allied war effort was his strategic vision for "unity of command." Ike's first ruminations on the problem of command and control for large-scale military operations date back to his tour in Panama shortly after World War I. In *Crusade in Europe*, Eisenhower recounts the advice he got from his mentor Fox Conner on the problem of command for the coming war:

Systems of single command will have to be worked out. We must not accept the "coordination" concept under which Foch was compelled to work. We must insist on individual and single responsibility—leaders will have to learn how to overcome nationalist considerations in the conduct of campaigns.³⁴

³²Spanoudis, *Quotations*.

³³Sixsmith, 8.

³⁴Eisenhower, *Crusade*, 18.

Eisenhower's study of history and philosophy, as well as his own research on World War I undertaken on behalf of the American Battlefield Monuments Commission convinced him of the truth of these lessons. His own logic concluded that a coalition command by committee was doomed to failure because it legitimized rather than erased the fault lines between the peer nations. Rather, the full weight and authority of command over all joint and combined forces within a theater of operations must rest on the shoulders of a single individual trusted by all partners—the unified commander.

It was Eisenhower who, during the ARCADIA conference, sold this concept to the Allies, and it was Eisenhower who made it work in practice. He had learned his lessons well.

Initiative

Eisenhower did not let the scope of his job responsibilities limit his vision or his quest for information. In a 1940 letter to Patton written while commanding a battalion in the 15th Infantry Regiment, Eisenhower confided that he was reading every Military Intelligence Division report coming out of the war. Moreover, to improve his comprehension of the events, he was delivering lectures on them as well.³⁵ When Marshall asked him for a recommended course of action in the Pacific, the very day he reported to his office in December 1941, he did not catch his new subordinate flat-footed. Eisenhower was well informed and able to generate a detailed response in a matter of hours because of the time he had continually invested in his own education.

³⁵Eisenhower, *Diaries*, 491.

Marshall was impressed by that first briefing and recognized in Eisenhower an initiative for self-education and problem solving that was lacking in others. Marshall confided, "Eisenhower, the department is filled with able men who analyze their problems well but feel compelled always to bring them to me for final solution. I must have assistants who will solve their own problems and tell me later what they have done."³⁶ Marshall had found that man.

³⁶ Ambrose, 61.

CHAPTER 3

THE GRAND STRATEGIST

I have a feeling that he was a far more complicated man than he seemed to be—a man who shaped events with such subtlety that he left others thinking that they were the architects of those events. And he was satisfied to leave it that way.¹

Don Whitehead

Eisenhower's Influence

Eisenhower had a considerable role in shaping U.S. and Allied strategy in World War II. He affected strategy through two mechanisms: by influencing decision makers with his persuasive arguments as strategist and by his own actions as strategic leader. While a member of Marshall's staff, Ike produced a constant stream of strategic analyses, decision documents, and position papers of such logic and clarity that his boss often took them directly to the President for consideration. In his first months as a planner on Marshall's staff, Eisenhower set the course of action and priorities for the United States effort in the Pacific, sold the Alliance on the concept of unified command, and produced the first plan for the cross-channel invasion of France. He continued to represent the American strategic perspective to Allied war planners and the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) right up to the moment of his appointment as commander for Operation TORCH.

¹Don Whitehead, SHAEF war correspondent, "A Correspondent's View of D-day," *D-day 1944*, Theodore A. Wilson, ed. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 212 (this anthology hereafter cited as *D-day 1944*).

A great deal of Eisenhower's influence is attributable to his immense initiative and personal level of effort.

Pacific Strategy

Eisenhower first reported to the office of the Army Chief of Staff as a freshly minted brigadier general the week following Pearl Harbor. Without pretense or small talk, Marshall immediately proceeded to deliver a twenty-minute inbrief on the situation in the Pacific. Then, perhaps as a test to see what caliber of mind he had really got in his new recruit, he posed to him the most pressing question of the hour—what to do about General MacArthur, who was trapped in the Philippines with the Japanese slowly tightening the noose around his neck? Eisenhower asked for several hours to think it over and then went off by himself to attack the problem in characteristic methodical fashion. Eisenhower had twice served as an aid to MacArthur, the second time in the Philippines. He was also a personal friend of Filipino President Manuel Quezon and was intimately familiar with the island nation's military capabilities. Eisenhower returned with a sober conviction—the Philippines were doomed to fall to the Japanese. But he also had a recommended course of action (which no one had yet proposed)²—establish a lifeline to Australia and preserve it as the long-term base of operations.³ Two weeks later at Christmas in a private White House meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill, the same conclusions were reached. Though Marshall and Eisenhower together tried every

²Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:5-6.

³Eisenhower, *Crusade*, 16-22.

scheme they could to assist MacArthur's beleaguered forces, they knew they were only delaying the inevitable. Ultimately they were able only to save the General himself by removing him to Australia as per Eisenhower's recommendation and showering him with the glory of a Medal of Honor and fourth star to keep him from looking the coward for leaving his troops behind.⁴ This was the first time Ike had to concern himself with issues at the national-strategic level, but his quick analysis produced a conceptual vision that matched reality and was in synch with that of the two heads of state he would soon serve more directly.

Grand Strategy

Eisenhower's focus quickly broadened from the Pacific Theater to the war as a whole. On 16 February 1941, two months after his arrival, Marshall promoted Ike to head of the War Plans Division. In March, Marshall reorganized his headquarters like a command post and appointed Eisenhower head of the Operations Division—a position the Chief described to President Roosevelt as his "subordinate commander."⁵ In these positions Eisenhower wrestled with American grand strategy.

Eisenhower visualized a strategy for victory which depended on three essential elements. The first and foremost of these was to keep the Soviets in the war. His work with Bernard Baruch in the 1930s on industrial mobilization had educated him on the

⁴Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942*, vol. 2 (New York: Viking, 1966), 238-39; and Leonard Mosley, *Marshall: Hero for Our Times* (New York: Hearst Books, 1982), 191.

⁵Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:109; and Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 250.

concept of "productive potentials." His cold calculus told him that it would take the combined industrial capacities of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and a mobilized United States to defeat the Axis powers and the resources they had already acquired.⁶ The USSR was the wildcard in this equation.

From his first day on Marshall's staff, Eisenhower's blizzard of strategic point papers argued the case for assisting the Soviets in any way possible. In February of 1942, Army intelligence warned of a possible separate peace negotiation between the Soviets and the Germans.⁷ In response, Ike worked with his staff to produce a plan which would eventually be known as Operation SLEDGEHAMMER, a cross-channel invasion of France to be launched in 1942. It was conceived as a sacrifice operation to be carried out in the event that the USSR was on the verge of collapse. Though he calculated the odds of such a premature operation remaining on French soil over the winter as being one in five, he was firmly convinced that, in drawing German forces to a new Western front, it had the great strategic import of influencing Stalin to keep his 8,000,000 Soviet soldiers in the war.⁸ His plan swayed the Americans and President Roosevelt, but it was stillborn as far as the British were concerned.⁹ They were still reeling from Dunkirk and Dieppe and had no intention of fighting another Paschendaele or Somme on the continent.

⁶Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:205.

⁷Mark A. Stoler, "Dwight D. Eisenhower: Architect of Victory," *D-day 1944*, 302.

⁸Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:390.

⁹Stoler, 304.

Eisenhower fully supported Lend-Lease aid to the Soviets, but he also saw another opportunity for synergistic effort—direct cooperation. On 17 December 1941, his third day under Marshall, Ike even made the provocative proposal of negotiating a secret arrangement to fly U.S. bombers against Germany from bases in Siberia.¹⁰ This idea was the precursor of operations VELVET and FRANTIC. He would continue to argue for a close cooperation with the Soviets throughout the war.

Even as Russian prospects brightened, Eisenhower's commitment remained unwavering. He wrote in November of 1942, "The Russian fight continues to stir me to the depths of my soul. They're hitting so hard that no one can fail to admire them."¹¹ In February 1945 with the end of the war in sight, his attitude was unchanged: "Lord knows they can't go too fast and too well for me. More power to them."¹² He knew that even the Allies' best effort on the Western front was a sideshow compared to the epic struggle in the East. His understanding of the relative magnitudes of the burdens borne by each country influenced his relentless commitment to Operation ANVIL (the invasion of southern France), as well as his fateful decision to halt the U.S. Ninth Army short of Berlin in 1945.

Eisenhower's second strategic imperative was to fight and finish the war in Europe first, while practicing strict economy of force in the Pacific. He arrived at this

¹⁰Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:9.

¹¹Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Letters to Mamie*, John S. D. Eisenhower, ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1978), 65 (hereafter cited as Eisenhower, *Letters*).

¹²Eisenhower, *Letters*, 235.

fervent conviction while still acting as Deputy Chief of Pacific Defense within one month of reporting to Marshall's staff. Papers from his first weeks on the job, written in the immediate wake of Pearl Harbor, clearly indicate his early preference for making the war in the Pacific the U.S. main effort. However, he was quick to broaden his perspective. By 22 January 1941, he had completely reversed himself and had come to the firm conviction that the Allies must fight in Europe first. In his notes that day he said, "We've got to go to Europe and fight—and we've got to quit wasting resources all over the world."¹³

Once he formed a strong opinion, Eisenhower never felt constrained to keep it to himself. Neither did he feel constrained to keep his opinions to matters within his own lane of responsibility. Displaying his gift for concise and direct communication, Eisenhower formulated and drafted a strategic proposal on 28 February 1942 misleadingly entitled "Strategic Conceptions and their application to Southwest Pacific."¹⁴ The real gist of this proposal was, much like the prewar RAINBOW FIVE plan, to fight a holding action in the Pacific while focusing the preponderance of effort to Europe in order to take Germany out of the war first. President Roosevelt had already committed to a "Europe first" policy with Churchill in the ARCADIA meetings in December and January, but largely for political reasons. Marshall immediately recognized Eisenhower's paper as the strategic framework that best rationalized that approach and provided a platform on which to build Allied war plans.

¹³Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:66.

¹⁴Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:149-155.

Eisenhower further refined his views in a 25 March memorandum on "Major Tasks of the War." In typical of Eisenhower fashion, it was essentially a two-page logic tree supported by an attached numerical analysis with supporting facts (in this case a table of the projected availability of landing craft).¹⁵ His essential tasks for 1942, in descending order of priority, included preventing the Axis from gaining an overwhelming strategic advantage by pushing Britain or the USSR out of the war, preventing the Axis from outstripping Allied productive potential by gaining further resources in the Near East, and supporting Australia and New Zealand. Marshall took this document, made some cosmetic changes, and championed it to the British as a contract for cooperation across the Atlantic. Once adopted, it became commonly known as the Marshall Memorandum, though it was essentially Eisenhower's work. It formed the conceptual basis for the BOLERO, ROUNDUP, and SLEDGEHAMMER plans.

When Churchill agreed "in principle" to these plans in April 1942, Eisenhower was euphoric—"At long last, and after months of struggle . . . we are all definitely committed to one concept of fighting! If we can agree on major purposes and objectives, our efforts will begin to fall in line and we won't just be thrashing around in the dark."¹⁶ The Europe first strategy was sealed, and it was due, in large measure, to Eisenhower's articulation of his strategic vision.

¹⁵Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:205-208.

¹⁶Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:260.

A third part of Eisenhower's strategic vision was his absolute devotion to a cross-channel invasion of France. Eisenhower became Marshall's overall strategic planner when he became head of the War Plans Division (later Operations Division) in mid-February 1942. By March, he and his staff had produced ROUNDUP (a decisive cross-channel invasion of France set for 1 April 1943), BOLERO (a massive buildup of U.S. forces in England), and SLEDGEHAMMER. ROUNDUP envisioned 48 infantry and armor divisions (30 U.S., 18 British) supported by 5,800 combat aircraft assaulting between Le Havre and Boulogne.¹⁷ (The force structure he eventually commanded in Operation OVERLORD included 38 motorized and armored divisions (20 U.S., 14 British, 3 Canadian, 1 French), and 12,000 aircraft.)¹⁸

Again, Eisenhower's logic and detailed planning quickly swayed Marshall and Roosevelt. But the British were unconvinced. On this issue, Eisenhower had to overcome a fundamental schism in grand strategy between the two nations. The Americans knew they would have to supply the overwhelming weight of force required to stop the Japanese in the Pacific, as well as the bulk of forces against the Germans in the Western Front. With huge commitments in two theaters of war, it was only natural to argue for quick and decisive action in order to reduce one theater as rapidly as possible in order to free up forces for the other.

¹⁷Ambrose, 68; and Stoler, 305.

¹⁸Larry H. Addington, *Patterns of War Since the Eighteenth Century* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 1994), 233.

The British, on the other hand, wanted to safeguard their colonial possessions around the world before disposing of the Germans and creating a power vacuum which the Russians (and others) would be only too happy to fill. Churchill's favored strategic concept of attacking the Third Reich at its periphery and searching for the "soft underbelly" of Fortress Europe was essentially an opportunistic approach. Beyond their imperial interests, it reflected the caution bred by huge losses in World War I, the experience at Dunkirk, insular and maritime traditions, a small-scale economy, and limited manpower for ground armies.¹⁹ It could not have been more diametrically opposed to Eisenhower's plan for decisive engagement in 1943 embodied in Operation ROUNDUP.

Eisenhower's case for a cross-channel invasion was based on several points. An invasion from England was the single course of action with the least demand for shipping (already known to be the limiting resource). It was the only place the British and Americans could mass offensive power while continuing to protect the British Isles and sea lines of communication. Northern France had the best road network into the heart of Germany. Invasion forces could operate under the vast umbrella of air superiority provided by the land-based Royal Air Force. And finally, even the building up of forces in Britain would force Hitler to shift divisions from the Eastern Front to reinforce his defenses in France, and thereby help Russia.²⁰ Though the British successfully stalled the

¹⁹Maurice Matloff, "Wilmot Revisited," *D-day 1944*, 5.

²⁰Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:205-208.

execution of ROUNDUP until 1944, they finally came to the realization that it was unavoidable (though it took ULTRA intercepts to convince them²¹). When Eisenhower commanded Operation OVERLORD in June of 1944, he was fulfilling his own strategic vision and executing a highly evolved version of the ROUNDUP plan he had developed in 1942.

Unified Command

Marshall, among others, was an advocate of unified command long before World War II and pushed for it during the ARCADIA conferences. The British rejected him out of hand. They saw no reason to abandon their established "committee system" of three co-equal theater commanders for land, sea, and air forces. After his rebuff by the British, Marshall tasked Eisenhower to work on defining the role of a unified commander in a manner acceptable to the Allies. Eisenhower had reported to Marshall's staff only ten days before—this short period (except for the brief meeting in 1927) was the sum total of their personal contact—yet Marshall had already developed high expectations. Within 24 hours, Ike had produced the first of what would be many strategic rabbits out of his hat—a seminal document whose clarity and sense swayed Marshall, Roosevelt, Churchill, and the rest of the United Nations.²²

²¹Alexander S. Cochran, "ULTRA, FORTITUDE, and D-day Planning," *D-day 1944*, 74.

²²British Chiefs of Staff Memorandum dated 10 January 1942. *Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Digital Archives* [database on-line]; available from <http://www.academic.marist.edu/psf/psfa05/ta05vv04.htm>; Internet; accessed 18 January 1999.

Eisenhower had listened carefully during the ARCADIA meetings to the stated strategic objectives and concerns over issues of sovereignty which had torpedoed Marshall's first attempt to broach the subject. He actually wrote his point paper in the form of an order to a yet unnamed general. At this moment in time, Eisenhower saw the Allies' common interests in the Southwestern Pacific Theater to be: (1) to prevent further Japanese penetration; (2) to establish specific secure air, land, and sea lines of communication to Australia, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippines; and (3) to defeat and expel the Japanese. To assuage national concerns about misuse of their contributed forces or infringements of sovereign authority, Eisenhower placed a series of restrictions on the authority of the unified commander. These restrictions prevented the unified commander from interfering with direct communication between subordinate forces and their national command authority, from consolidating or restructuring units or logistics across nationality boundaries, and from making any changes whatsoever to subordinate leadership.²³

However, Eisenhower was not completely satisfied with the compromise nature of his creation. Later, when it came his turn, he would refuse to accept most of the impediments with which he had hobbled the first unified commander. Eisenhower's achievement at ARCADIA was not in perfecting the concept of unified command, it was in taking a dormant theoretical concept and bringing it to life through the power of his vision. Thirteen days after he drafted the document, the first unified command was given

²³Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:29.

to General Archibald P. Wavell, Commander of British Forces in India. His deputy was from the U.S., establishing a pattern of counterbalancing nationalities within the chain of command which would hold true for all of Eisenhower's staffs. Wavell's command dissolved with the fall of Malaya in 1942, but its brief existence served to irretrievably commit the British to placing their forces under a unified commander.

In a similar vein, Eisenhower produced a series of point papers in May and early June 1942 defining the role of the future commander of U.S. forces within the emerging European theater of operations. On 8 June Roosevelt signed Eisenhower's final draft of an order establishing the European Theater Commander.²⁴ On 11 June, Marshall informed Eisenhower that the job was to be his.²⁵ His highly effective performance over the next month in that office earned him universal praise from both the British and the Americans.

In July of 1942, the CCS met in London to wrestle over combined military strategy and operations for 1942 and 1943. After finally agreeing on opening a second front in North Africa, the question of the unified commander for the operation remained. Eisenhower was the one man in the Army who was able to earn the friendship and cooperation of Admiral Ernest J. King, the crusty Navy Commander in Chief. It is ironic that it was King's endorsement of the fledgling general before the CCS that won him the

²⁴Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:334.

²⁵Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:337.

job as unified commander for TORCH, and command of the first Allied operation in the European theater of war.²⁶

As Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces for Operation TORCH, Eisenhower found himself in the curious position of executing a plan antithetical to his strategic vision. He was so opposed to operations in North Africa that he confided to his staff that the day that TORCH was agreed upon might very well be "the blackest day in history."²⁷ However, now having the role of strategic leader vice strategic theorist, he immediately applied his full energies and vision to executing the operation he had been assigned.

Eisenhower's contributions to grand strategy did not end, as would be expected, with his assignment to field command. Instead, he continued to try to shape the world to his vision by using his positional authority and by taking decisive strategic action when his political bosses were at an impasse due to conflicting national interests.

²⁶Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 252.

²⁷Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 29.

CHAPTER 4

THE SUPREME COMMANDER

After the battle the king may dispose of my head as he will, but during the battle he will kindly allow me to make use of it.¹

Seydlitz

Independence

The word “supreme” in Eisenhower’s job title was more than a superlative. It described the position of authority and autonomy that Eisenhower envisioned for a true unified commander, and toward which he constantly labored once the job was his. By his own design, he occupied the only position in the Allied chain of command where joint and combined military authority was concentrated in one individual. Though not personally power hungry, he used his people skills to bolster his authority as unified commander. He took advantage of his forward position and loose reins to shape the war effort to his own vision. He built the Allied headquarters required to direct warfare across a theater of operations. He handpicked his American army, corps, and division commanders, and formed excellent working relationships with the Allied commanders. He pursued his own vision for the campaign in Europe despite impassioned pleas for a different strategy from Prime Minister Churchill. He impacted grand strategy through his military diplomacy. He waged a highly effective information operations campaign which

¹Seydlitz at the battle of Zorndorf. Quoted in Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, FMFM 1-1: *Campaigning* (Washington, DC: HQ, USMC, 1990), 92.

raised his stature, especially in the eyes of the British. Roosevelt and Churchill even accepted a policy whereby Eisenhower was free to make military decisions subject only to their veto in the case of overriding political imperatives.

In his subtle and disarming way, Eisenhower amassed more power and influence as unified commander than he was expressly given. He was a decisive field commander with his own tactical and strategic vision. He led four coalition campaigns culminating in the unconditional surrender of Germany in May of 1945. His relative youth and a vast reservoir of personal energy allowed him to bear a workload that would have flattened other men. Eisenhower proved the value of original thought and action in the higher echelons. He accomplished the unreasonable task of fighting and winning a theater war on his own terms.

Unified Commander

Before Eisenhower could execute, he had to create. The requirement to create power as well as apply it is a fundamental characteristic of strategic generalship. Eisenhower's primary creative tasks as Supreme Allied Commander were to define his own role and to build an integrated and efficient staff. Eisenhower had already begun by providing the job description for the first unified commander. He now he set about redefining the role by strengthening his position in that office.

From his initial draft of the job description for Wavell's command, Eisenhower worked constantly to increase the authority of the unified commander. When he wrote the job description for the American European theater commander for Marshall, he

included "independence of thought" as one of the requirements.² He himself was a fiercely independent individual and fought for ever greater autonomy when he held the role. Eisenhower was adamant that manifest responsibility rested on his shoulders alone, and that such responsibility conveyed with it the authority to plan the operation and coordinate the efforts of his deputies. His concept of unified command was that his deputies were responsible for forces in contact, but he himself maintained overall operational, as well as organizational control. He deplored the "British tendency toward reaching down into a theater and attempting to compel an organization along the lines to which they are accustomed."³

Eisenhower was only partially successful in strengthening his hand initially as Commander in Chief of Allied Forces for TORCH. The British won concessions which preserved their separate but equal chiefs for the land, sea, and air services as his deputies. Each of these subordinates outranked Eisenhower by a star.⁴ The CCS, under the influence of Sir Alan Brooke (Marshall's British counterpart), continuously tried to shrink Eisenhower's authority and bypass him by giving specific instructions directly to these deputies.

Ike viewed each such attempt as "an intrusion into the organizational set-up of an Allied Commander . . . [which dulled] the principle of unity of command."⁵ In response

²Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:327.

³Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:944.

⁴Ambrose, 90.

⁵Butcher Diaries, A-211.

to a series of such meddling efforts by the CCS culminating with an especially troubling message on 20 January 1943, Eisenhower composed a fiery reply (softened by his staff) rejecting what he viewed as reneging on the commitment to unity of command. He backfired Marshall on his position: "When the two governments accept the principle of unified command . . . they must leave him a considerable freedom in organizing his own forces as he sees fit." Even more boldly, he said of the CCS position that "as far as I'm concerned, no attention will be paid to such observations."⁶

Eisenhower never officially got the sweeping authority he desired from the CCS, but, remarkably, he effectively won it at the personal level with his deputies and field commanders. In a September 1943 letter to Lord Mountbatten, who had just been appointed Supreme Commander of the Southeast Asia theater, Eisenhower explained:

The written basis for allied unity of command is found in directives issued by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The true basis lies in the earnest cooperation of the senior officers assigned to an allied theater. Since cooperation, in turn, implies such things as selflessness, devotion to a common cause, generosity in attitude, and mutual confidence, it is easy to see that actual unity in an allied command depends directly upon the individuals in the field.⁷

Eisenhower's sea deputy for TORCH, Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, was well known and respected throughout England for his military prowess. He was one of Eisenhower's earliest and strongest supporters. His considerable reputation lent credence and legitimacy to the fledgling unified commander.⁸ In a postwar tribute, Cunningham spoke highly of Eisenhower.

⁶Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:943-46.

⁷Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1420-1424.

⁸Sixsmith, 36-38.

I liked him at once. He struck me as being completely sincere, straightforward and very modest. In those early days I rather had the impression that he was not very sure of himself; but who could wonder at that? He was in supreme command of one of the greatest amphibious operations of all time, and was working in a strange country. . . . But . . . it was not long before one recognized him as the really great man he is—forceful, able, direct and far-seeing, with great charm of manner, and always with a rather naïve wonder at attaining the high position in which he found himself.⁹

Similarly, Eisenhower was able to develop personal friendships with his air deputy, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur W. Tedder, and his land deputy, General Sir Harold R. L. Alexander. In this way, Eisenhower increased his authority through the consent of the governed, rather than by the consent of his superiors. His stature and authority (both real and contrived) grew with each campaign, as did his circle of devoted friends. In his role as Supreme Allied Commander for Operation OVERLORD, Eisenhower finally approached the level of authority he had envisioned for a true unified commander.

Staffs

Eisenhower was also working to fulfill a second part of his vision for effective coalition command, an integrated staff. Ike's vision for the war and beyond was an Anglo-American relationship where national rivalries were completely subordinated to the combined national interests. He set about realizing this vision in the microcosm of his Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) staff for the North Africa campaign. He applied his people and organizational skills to converting the nationalistic planning teams he

⁹Sixsmith, 37.

inherited into unified staffs capable of performing command and control functions for the vast array of assembled Allied forces at his disposal.

To achieve unity of purpose and effort, Eisenhower instituted a firm policy of absolute integration. He began by ensuring his staffs were manned with a near parity of American and British staff officers. Next he insisted on complete vertical and horizontal integration. Horizontal integration was achieved by ensuring that each staff section (G-2, G-3, etc.) had members from both nations working together on its products. Vertical integration consisted of inter-layering nationalities by level of authority (e.g., while Eisenhower's three service chiefs were British, their deputies were American). This pattern of alternating nationality by command tier was generally followed throughout.¹⁰

Ike was determined to build his staffs into an extension of his personality. Use of the personal pronouns "I," "my," or "mine" in official correspondence was only permitted on documents expressly prepared or reviewed by the commander.¹¹ Ike tolerated no disloyalties or disunity within the ranks of his subordinates. When one of the American members of his AFHQ staff was accused of making a disparaging remark about one of the British members, the commander promptly investigated and passed judgment. The American was found to be at fault, summarily demoted, and shipped off to the States. The offended British officer appealed the decision as too harsh—"He only called me the son of a bitch, sir, and all of us have now learnt that this is a colloquial

¹⁰Christopher R. Gabel, "Combined Headquarters: SHAEF, 1944-45," *The History of Warfighting: Theory and Practice (C600 Terms II and III Syllabus/Book of Readings, AY 1998-1999)* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1998), 256-264.

¹¹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:xvi.

expression which is sometimes used almost as a term of endearment.” Eisenhower replied, “I am informed he called you a *British* son of a bitch. That is quite different. My ruling stands.”¹²

Eisenhower’s brand of “political correctness” chaffed opinionated and vocally unrestrained men like Patton. One of the contributing factors for Eisenhower’s relief of Fredendall was his habit of openly disparaging the British. He sent enough officers home for similar offenses that the word soon spread that Anglophobia was a cardinal sin in the European theater.¹³ Eisenhower practiced what he preached and served as a role model for cooperation. With his personal example in support, and without the corrosive action of hypocrisy or inconsistency to undermine it, what began as a policy of cooperation became a spirit of cooperation permeating his headquarters. AFHQ became a tightly knit staff that truly served the interests of both principal allies, and whose actions bore their stamp of approval.

Eisenhower was no less successful with his gigantic SHAEF staff. Lieutenant General Morgan and General Marshall had formed and reformed the headquarters for Operation OVERLORD, but neither had Eisenhower’s vision for it as an active command.¹⁴ Eisenhower was not content to be a figurehead, but was determined to direct the war himself from SHAEF. After his arrival in London, the planning headquarters took on a new name, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). It

¹²Ambrose, 76.

¹³Morelock, 50-51.

¹⁴Pogue, *Supreme Command*, 59-60.

also became transformed into an operational center through which Eisenhower could exercise real field command.

Around a nucleus of officers transplanted from AFHQ, grew a vast structure that eventually numbered more than 16,000. The spirit of cooperation from AFHQ also migrated with Eisenhower. Having become even more politically adept from his experience in the Mediterranean, Eisenhower directly involved representatives from the U.S. Department of State and the British Foreign Office in his SHAEF planning to further legitimize the combined nature of his operations. He also tightly integrated members of the press. Only Eisenhower's capacities for vision and energy allowed him to maintain a span of control across such a vast headquarters, let alone the land campaign itself. The ultimate success of the AFHQ experiment proved the viability of a coalition command. The success of SHAEF proved that, under the right leader, such a command can endure the trials of war and achieve ultimate victory.

Energy

As the war in Europe was grinding to the end in February of 1945, Eisenhower wrote to Marshall ranking the relative contributions of 38 general officers to the success of the war.¹⁵ The word he used more frequently in praising them than all others was "energetic" (11 times). Eisenhower himself possessed great quantities of this manifestation of initiative that he so valued in subordinates. As large as his headquarters

¹⁵Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2466-69.

grew, it was always clear to everyone that Eisenhower was not a figurehead at the top, but the dynamo at bottom sustaining the whole enterprise with his personal energy.

Eisenhower was 52 years old when selected to be the Commander in Chief of Allied Forces for Operation TORCH. He was much younger than the crop of likely candidates for the job of Allied Commander, and a very surprising pick. Had Marshall relied more on the typical criteria of seniority and experience in his recommendation to Roosevelt, the job would have gone to someone much older like Lieutenant General Walter Krueger. Eisenhower actually found himself in the delicate position of being younger and more junior in permanent rank than any of his immediate subordinates throughout the war. Eisenhower's relative youth was, however, an asset.

J. F. C. Fuller's study of the failings of World War I generalship led him to conclude that "health, vigor, and energy are essential assets, and there can be no question, that normally they are the attributes of youth rather than old age."¹⁶ Joffre and Foch were both sexagenarians, and Haig was in his early fifties when the war began. Napoleon's maxims include the rule that "no general of over forty-five years of age should be allotted an active command in the field, and no general over sixty should be given any but an honorary appointment."¹⁷ Both Fuller and Napoleon recognized the tremendous demands that high command places upon the intellect and physical constitution of the general. Eisenhower's physical and psychological energy translated into better command, control, and awareness of his forces and the battlefield. His energy fueled his vision.

¹⁶Fuller, *Generalship*, 70.

¹⁷Fuller, *Generalship*, 70.

When he traveled across the Atlantic in May of 1942 in his capacity as senior strategic planner, Eisenhower was astounded at the inactivity of the Americans already in London. He found them totally isolated from the British and working a standard forty-hour week. In contrast, he had been burning the midnight oil back in Washington since his Sunday arrival on 14 December 1941. When his dad died that March, Ike missed the funeral. His mourning consisted of quitting work on the following day at the early hour of 7:30 p.m. and closing his office door for 30 minutes on the day of the burial in order to compose a short eulogy.¹⁸ Eisenhower was amazed that others did not have the same sense of urgency. Upon his return to the States, Eisenhower explained his concern to his boss in his usual diplomatic way: "Our own people are able but do not quite understand what we want done. It is necessary to get a punch behind the job or we'll never be ready by spring, 1943, to attack. We must get going!"¹⁹ The following month he was appointed commander of all American forces in the European theater of operations.

Eisenhower was predisposed to be a workaholic. As a staff officer, he was devoted to his superiors and never left the office until the "Old Man" had departed.²⁰ As a commanding officer, he expected the same from his staffs. Once installed in London as European theater Commander, he immediately instituted a seven-day workweek just as he had back at the War Department. He expected his people to be at their desks by 1000 Sunday mornings. To remove the distractions of the "Social Front" of London and to

¹⁸Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:183-84.

¹⁹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:328.

²⁰Butcher, *My Three Years*, 12.

improve the cohesiveness of his newly formed AFHQ, Eisenhower sought to move it to the countryside. He tasked his reluctant subordinates with finding a remote place "where all hands could live together like a football team and think, plan, and execute war all our waking hours."²¹ He was unsuccessful in this effort in 1942, but in February 1944 he moved SHAEF to Bushey Park and set up shop in tents and camouflage.²²

In garrison and in the field, Ike's quarters had historically been a rallying point for informal debriefs, frank discussion, griping, complaining, venting of steam, and socializing.²³ Upon his appointment as Allied Commander for Operation TORCH, Eisenhower's life suddenly became consumed by a never-ending cycle of conferences, meetings, inspections, visits to the front, press conferences, audiences with heads of state, and entertaining VIPs. His rough-hewn social skills were put to the test, as was his physical stamina. Those social engagements that he could not refuse would often last into the small hours of the morning. Prime Minister Churchill would invariably keep him up till 0200 trying to persuade him to some line of strategy. On his innumerable travel circuits, he sometimes found himself without sleep for as long as 40 hours because of the density of his engagements and the rigors of driving on poor roads and flying in bad weather.²⁴

²¹Butcher, *My Three Years*, 7.

²²Ambrose, 125.

²³Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 243.

²⁴Eisenhower, *Letters*, 134.

Eisenhower dealt with the crushing day-to-day workload like any other commander or executive: he built a massive staff and fenced himself in with a core of trusted people to shield him from all but essential demands on his time. Eisenhower's excellent core group of aides including his Chief of Staff, Major General Walter Bedell "Beetle" Smith, LCDR Harry C. Butcher, USNR, and Major Ernest R. "Tex" Lee. These people served him well in deflecting as much superfluous work as possible from their commander. However, the flood was still overwhelming.

Eisenhower would frequently rise at 0430 to try to carve out some time for personal activities like letter writing.²⁵ Reflecting on his responsibilities as a Unified Commander, he wrote:

An Allied C in C takes a forceful pounding, every day . . . War creates such a strain that all the pettiness, jealousy, ambition, greed and selfishness begin to leak out the seams of the average character. On top of this are the problems created by the enemy, by weather, by international politics, including age old racial and nationalistic animosities, by every conceivable kind of difficulty, and, finally, just by the nature of war itself. All these things, in some form or another, get in front of me.²⁶

He was soon dealing with an alphabet soup of agencies and recounted to his wife, Mamie, the nuisance of it all—"Red Cross—Lease Lend—OSS—AAA—BBB—CCC and all the other organizations and letters get me nuts at times."²⁷ "In a place like this the C[ommanding] G[eneral] . . . must be a bit of a diplomat—lawyer—promoter—

²⁵Eisenhower, *Letters*, 125.

²⁶Eisenhower, *Letters*, 74.

²⁷Eisenhower, *Letters*, 38.

salesman—social hound—*liar* (at least to get out of social affairs)—mountebank—actor—Simon Legree—humanitarian—orator—and incidentally . . . a soldier!”²⁸

Where operational leadership requires an ability to determine when and where to mass military resources, leadership at the strategic level involves the ability to determine when and where to provide personal presence. Since the higher commander cannot be in all places at once, he must pick his spots carefully.²⁹ In another letter to Mamie (punctuated with comments explaining how, between nearly each sentence, he has suffered some interruptions by unscheduled visitors, air raids, or other war exigencies), Eisenhower discussed this very difficulty.

I have to decide whether I must stay here for the time being or rush off 400 miles in this direction or 500 in the other. Since the only sure way—ordinarily—is to go by car, and roads are poor and crooked, you can see that just to get an hour’s visit somewhere I have to be away two or three days—maybe more. Since, in the end, all questions sift back here, it’s not difficult to understand that the mere problem of deciding upon my personal movement is not too simple.³⁰

Eisenhower had earlier confided: “I have been absolutely brutal, both in London and in this place, in declining invitations. Occasionally though one jumps up that I have to accept and it always puts me in a bad temper for the whole day.”³¹

Eisenhower’s health was eventually affected by his murderous schedule. He sustained his brutal pace by chain-smoking four packs of cigarettes a day³² with the

²⁸Eisenhower, *Letters*, 38.

²⁹FMFM 1-1, 82.

³⁰Eisenhower, *Letters*, 74.

³¹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 71.

³²Ambrose, 74.

rationale that "it's the only bad habit I have."³³ His dining habits were not much better. He hated British food, and for dinner one night ate nothing but a box of candy Mamie had sent.³⁴ He wrote her in February of 1943, "My health remains good, which sometimes astounds me, considering the hours I keep and the life I lead—also the number of cigarettes I burn up."³⁵ But, the constant travel, lack of sleep, and chain-smoking eventually took a physical toll on the commander. In January 1943 he was diagnosed with "walking pneumonia," and 1945 was still writing home about how he had been unable to shake the same cold he had been fighting since North Africa.³⁶ He also had a bad knee from a football injury at West Point and was constantly reinjuring it bouncing around in the back of his staff car or B-17. An acute episode with his pneumonia or knee had him bedridden on several occasions.

When his personal fame began to swell later in the war, he shouldered the added burdens of fan mail and letters from mothers anxious about their soldier sons. Rather than ignore such overtures, Eisenhower felt a duty to answer each one. He actually established a position in his headquarters and auditioned several people in order to find someone who could respond to such correspondence in a reasonable facsimile of his

³³Eisenhower, *Letters*, 93.

³⁴Eisenhower, *Letters*, 32-33.

³⁵Eisenhower, *Letters*, 64.

³⁶Eisenhower, *Letters*, 77.

simple and direct style.³⁷ He would often sign fifty responses to such letters at a sitting, and came to abhor the length of his last name.³⁸

Surprisingly, Eisenhower described himself as “lazy by nature”³⁹ and cited his “fanatical hatred of a pen.”⁴⁰ He may have hated the pen, but he composed 319 wartime letters to his wife, of which all but three were written longhand.⁴¹ The evidence argues that Eisenhower was a man of tremendous energy and initiative who sought out his tremendous responsibilities and discharged them conscientiously. If he was lazy, it was the laziness of a busy man looking for a more efficient way to do the repetitive and mundane tasks. Butcher’s diary shows that, while he may have hated to work in manuscript, he was often busy enough to keep two stenographers at work simultaneously.⁴² Eisenhower diligently kept his superiors informed by weekly letters and cables. His headquarters generated a flood of processed data for superior and subordinate units, civil authorities, the press, and others. That portion of the official correspondence directly attributable to the commander himself fills five volumes.

³⁷Eisenhower, *Letters*, 215.

³⁸Eisenhower, *Letters*, 224.

³⁹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 157.

⁴⁰Eisenhower, *Letters*, 159.

⁴¹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 13.

⁴²Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:396.

The Front

Eisenhower firmly believed that every commander, even the supreme commander, had to get out of his headquarters and see the front. Maintaining his accurate vision of his own forces, the enemy, and the terrain demanded current information that was not filtered through too many intermediaries. He made frequent trips to the front to exercise direct command, to observe the conditions in which his men were fighting, to assess and bolster their morale, and to gather data for key decisions.

In his initial weeks as Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces in North Africa, Eisenhower was initially frustrated in his attempts to break away from his headquarters because of his still fluid command structure and lack of transportation.⁴³ He expressed his frustration to Walter Bedell Smith who was still working directly for Marshall in DC:

You cannot imagine just how much I would like to be down there in actual charge of the tactics of that operation. This does not imply any lack of confidence in Anderson; on the contrary, I think he is doing a grand job and almost carrying things forward on his own shoulders. It is merely that I get so impatient to get ahead that I want to be at the place where there is some chance to push a soldier a little faster or hurry up the unloading of a boat. You can see that this business of high command has certain drawbacks.⁴⁴

As Allied operations in North Africa shifted from a logistical to a combat focus between 24 February and 5 January 1943, Eisenhower made four trips from his Algiers headquarters to his forward command post in Constantine. Each time he inspected the front. After his third trip he concluded that his American and French forces were too thinly arrayed and would be vulnerable if Rommel were to defy prudence and attack

⁴³Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:718.

⁴⁴Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:718-719.

toward the Faid Pass instead of retreating into Bizerte, Tunisia as his intelligence officer predicted. He directed General Kenneth Anderson, who was in command of the land forces engaged, to pull back the scattered 1st U.S. Armored Division and concentrate them as a reserve to foil such an attack. On 13 February Eisenhower made his fourth trip to the front and found his orders had still not been carried out. He observed the U.S. armored forces still spread out in a thin line. Two hours after his departure for Algiers to write corrective orders, Rommel struck the Faid Pass region and inflicted a devastating blow to Fredendall's II Corps in what came to be known as the battle of "Kasserine Pass."

Eisenhower's near capture did not deter future visits to the front. It was his Christmas Eve inspection of the front in 1942—seeing the tanks disabled by the mud and the misery of the troops—that led him to call off the race for Tunisia for the Winter.⁴⁵ In September and October 1943 as the Allies were clawing their way up the boot of Italy, Ike made half a dozen trips to the front. His perception of the precarious situation of LTG Mark W. Clarke's U.S. Fifth Army at Salerno convinced him to send in his reserves and use his political weight to divert the Mediterranean Strategic Air Forces, not then under his command, to tactical support missions.

Eisenhower literally risked life and limb to maintain his presence throughout the theater. When he made his brief visit to the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, President Roosevelt noticed that he was uncharacteristically "jittery." It was soon

⁴⁵Butcher, *My Three Years*, 239.

reported to him that Ike's B-17 Flying Fortress had lost two motors in a storm over the Atlas Mountains on his way in, and he had nearly had to bail out.⁴⁶ Eisenhower often had to order his pilots to take off in marginal weather for an engagement he judged worthy of the risk.⁴⁷

Because his air force commanders insisted on pulling precious fighters from the front to escort duty whenever he traveled by anything less well-armed than a B-17, Eisenhower often chose to go by car.⁴⁸ Long distances, poor roads, and night convoys made this mode of travel no safer. On one morning, Commander Butcher awoke to find his boss black and blue after a visit to the front. Eisenhower's driver had fallen asleep after 36 hours of continuous duty and driven into a ditch.⁴⁹ The General, after being tossed about in the car, had to disembark and help to push it back onto the road.⁵⁰

Eisenhower's compulsion to see the front also manifested itself during OVERLORD. The Supreme Commander insisted on personally touring the Normandy beaches the day after D-day. He came ashore in a landing craft through waters the Germans had freshly mined from the air, wearing a life belt over his famous "Ike jacket" uniform coat.⁵¹ One month later, he decided to get a better view of the overall situation.

⁴⁶Eisenhower, *Letters*, 78; and Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 259.

⁴⁷Ambrose, 149.

⁴⁸Butcher Diaries, A-220.

⁴⁹Butcher Diaries, A-225.

⁵⁰Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 262.

⁵¹*D-day 1944*, 274.

After a Fourth of July celebration in the Normandy beachhead, Ike hopped into a converted two-seat P-51 Mustang piloted by Major General Elwood "Pete" Quesada, commander of the IX Tactical Air Command. His reconnaissance flight over the German lines displayed his confidence in Allied air superiority, tickled the press, and probably did allow him to better visualize the battlefield; but it undoubtedly wrinkled the brows of his superiors.⁵²

Eisenhower was probably no more directly involved in fighting the war than during the near entrapment of a German army in the Falaise Pocket. Smelling a possible decisive victory which would hasten the end of the war, Eisenhower wrote an impassioned letter for distribution to each individual soldier. Like his personal Order of the Day for D-Day, it explained the significance of the current operations and asked his troops to give their best efforts. Unable to contain himself in his SHAEF headquarter still in London, Eisenhower flew out to Montgomery. Trying to stir the sedentary British into action, Bedell Smith observed that "he was up and down the line like a football coach, exhorting everyone to aggressive action."⁵³ He even appealed directly to Churchill. Correctly envisioning the German counterattack, Eisenhower met with Bradley and coordinated a bold move whereby the Americans would rely on airpower and artillery to cover their flanks and lines of communication while the First and Third Armies raced to envelope the enemy salient. While Montgomery waited for the proper moment of

⁵²Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1971; and Eisenhower, *Letters*, 195.

⁵³Ambrose, 149.

“balance” before attacking, 40,000 of the 100,000 trapped Germans fought their way past Patton’s half of the pincer to their rear. The British side never closed from the north to meet it. Still, Eisenhower’s forces captured 50,000 and killed 10,000 in an operation with a great degree of calculated risk.⁵⁴

Tactical Vision

Ike’s vision reached down to the tactical level as well. A very significant portion of his time was devoted to maintaining his grasp of the tactical level of warfare within his theater. He observed exercises and investigated new tactics. He interviewed his commanders to find out what was working on the battlefield and what was not. He wrote Marshall of the relative performance of Allied equipment in comparison to that of the Germans, and even the other allies. He kept abreast of innovations and shared the knowledge up and down the chain of command immediately to try to capitalize on fleeting advantages. Ike largely hand-picked his American subordinates down to the division level, and needed a clear grasp of tactical capabilities to know when poor performance was due to German advantage or U.S. incompetence.

The most significant tactical application of Eisenhower’s vision was his use of airpower. Rather than observing a strict line between ground and air forces, or allowing them to fight independent strategic campaigns, he fought for tight integration. He also did not honor the doctrinal distinction between tactical air support and strategic bombing,

⁵⁴ Ambrose, 153.

but fought the two as one whenever he had the authority to do so. Eisenhower priorities for the use of all airpower in his Normandy campaign were:

- a. Normal close support of ground forces;
- b. Smashing of communication lines;
- c. Neutralizing of CROSSBOW [V-weapons];
- d. Airborne operations;
- e. Supply of troops by air.⁵⁵

The direct attack of Germany was a secondary priority.⁵⁶ To Eisenhower, the air arm was like a boxer's jabs, opening up the opponent to the finishing blow from the ground forces. He saw much more synergy in using both fists against Normandy rather than having them directed at two completely different pieces of geography.

In order to use airpower as he saw fit, Eisenhower fought a three-year campaign for control of the strategic air forces. He tried to gain command of all theater air forces for the North Africa campaign, but lacked the military stature to sway the CCS. He fought the battle again for Italy, but only succeeded briefly after the operation had already begun and the American Fifth Army at Salerno was nearly driven back into the sea. In the months before D-Day, he again insisted on control. Moreover, he had the audacity to propose shifting them to tactical targets prior to the invasion itself.

Eisenhower's concept for joint employment of air and ground forces was realized in the "Transportation Plan" cooked up by one of the theorists on Tedder's staff.⁵⁷ Eisenhower immediately seized on its central concept of preparing Normandy for

⁵⁵Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1946.

⁵⁶Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1946.

⁵⁷Tedder's scientific advisor, Professor Solly Zuckerman. Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1717-18.

invasion by using strategic bombing to interdict the lines of communication the Germans would need to reinforce their coastal defenses.⁵⁸

He was opposed by such prominent figures as LTG Carl A. "Tooe" Spaatz, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris, and Lieutenant General James Doolittle. He also had to overcome the stigma of strategic bombing in support of ground operations that resulted from friendly casualties suffered at Cassino earlier in the year in Italy.⁵⁹ Ike considered Spaatz, the commander of the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in the European theater, to be a very close friend.⁶⁰ He also recognized him as a capable commander.⁶¹ However, the two could come to no agreement. Spaatz countered Eisenhower's plan with his own stridently strategic "Oil Plan" targeting Germany's petroleum production. Eisenhower was unrelenting, and an angry Spaatz nearly resigned in protest.⁶² When the CCS started to renege on their decision to give Eisenhower temporary command of strategic air for OVERLORD, it was his turn to threaten resignation. The CCS finally acquiesced. Ike finally received direct control of Doolittle's U. S. Eighth Air Force and Harris' RAF Bomber Command in mid April, 1944.⁶³ He immediately pulled them off the POINTBLANK strategic bombing campaign and directed air attacks against transportation assets and lines of communication supporting German beach defenses.

⁵⁸ Alan Wilt, "The Air Campaign," *D-day 1944*, 139.

⁵⁹ Wilt, 150.

⁶⁰ Eisenhower, *Letters*, 255.

⁶¹ Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2466-69.

⁶² Wilt, 140.

⁶³ Eisenhower, *Letters*, 163.

History vindicated Eisenhower's decision. The Strategic Bombing Survey itself recognized the effectiveness of the transportation plan.⁶⁴ Reinforcing German units were severely disrupted and delayed as they tried to reach to the fight, and when they arrived, were insufficient to repel the Allies from their beachhead for the 49 days before the breakout. After the lodgement was firmly established, control of the air was supposed to revert to Harris and Spaatz, but the allies found themselves hemmed in by the well-defended city of Caen and the treacherous bocage country.⁶⁵ Once again, Eisenhower's control of strategic air allowed Bradley to design and execute Operation COBRA and use 4800 bomber sorties to blast a hole in the German lines at St. Lo.⁶⁶ Even Spaatz was ultimately swayed to Eisenhower's view:

There has been a tendency to over-emphasize long-range bombardment, and to ignore the versatile application of airpower. Our Air Forces were used for any mission considered important, at any given moment. Especially misleading is the distinction made between strategic and tactical air forces. That distinction is not valid in describing the use of airpower as a whole, day after day. For instance, the primary mission of the strategic forces was to destroy the enemy's war industries, to deprive him of means to fight. But these same bombers, and their fighter escorts of the strategic air forces, constituted the heaviest striking power at General Eisenhower's command to sweep the Luftwaffe from the air, to isolate German ground forces from reinforcements and supplies, and to spark the advance of our ground troops by visual and radar cooperation.⁶⁷

⁶⁴*The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Summary Report)* (Washington, DC: U.S. War Department, 1945), passim.

⁶⁵Michael D. Doubler, *Busting the Bocage: American Combined Arms Operations in France, 6 June-31 July 1944* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1988), passim.

⁶⁶Wilt, 150.

⁶⁷Carl A. Spaatz. Quoted in Joint Publication 3-56.1: *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Staff (J-7), 1996), 7.

Strategic Vision

As unified commander of Allied forces, Eisenhower continued to have a role in influencing military and grand strategy. Disagreements between Roosevelt and Churchill or their remoteness from the problem at hand presented him with gaps in strategic guidance, which he was quick to fill. His decisions in these circumstances therefore determined *de facto* grand strategy. He was also able to use his diplomatic skills to lobby his bosses and to establish strategic military alliances along the way. Remarkably, Eisenhower had such a position of trust with both Roosevelt and Churchill that they let him pursue a military solution in Germany with very little political restraint.

Eisenhower primarily influenced strategy as a military diplomat. It was Eisenhower's headquarters that negotiated the cooperation of the Vichy French in North Africa, and it was Eisenhower who bore the political burden of that relationship. Eisenhower's fight for control of the strategic air forces obviously impacted the economic campaign against Germany, and therefore grand strategy. His insistence on the ANVIL landings preempted Churchill's plans for other operations, but influenced the Grand Alliance by promoting solidarity with the Soviets. Eisenhower alone was able to build a working relationship with de Gaulle and the Free French when all others, including the affable Marshall, had failed.⁶⁸ It was Eisenhower who pushed the CCS for greater strategic cooperation with the Russians.⁶⁹ The trust he built with Stalin and the Soviet

⁶⁸Mosley, 208-209; and Forrest C. Pogue, *D-day 1944*, 187.

⁶⁹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2367.

generals also influenced the final phase of the European war and the subsequent occupation of Germany.

The Free French were a particular challenge to Eisenhower, and required his most delicate handling. Exasperated at the hoops through which he was forced to jump to keep the French in the Alliance, he said: "My life is a mixture of politics and war. The latter is bad enough—but I've been trained for it! The former is straight and unadulterated venom! But I have to devote lots of my time, and much more of my good disposition, to it."⁷⁰ As the U.S. First and Third Armies wheeled through France following the COBRA breakout, military expediency argued for a bypass of Paris in favor of a continued rapid pursuit of German forces in flight to the West Wall defenses. Plans to bypass the city had already been laid when Parisian resistance forces, anticipating liberation, began to rise against the Nazis. Eisenhower quickly realized the devastating political ramifications of allowing the Germans in Paris the breathing room to suppress the resistance and perhaps even destroy the city, and he ordered the city liberated. What is more, he directed that the First French Armored Division have the glory of spearheading the liberation, and thus restore the national pride of France.⁷¹

Four months later, During the Battle of the Bulge, Eisenhower ordered his Sixth Army in the south of France to the defensive, so he could shift units to reinforce the beleaguered First Army. He specifically ordered the Sixth Army to withdraw from the

⁷⁰Eisenhower, *Letters*, 149.

⁷¹John S. D. Eisenhower, *D-day 1944*, xiv.

recently liberated Alsatian town of Strasbourg and move to a more defensible position. De Gaulle, having just declared himself to be the leader of France in the wake of the Liberation of Paris, was furious over this. In a fit of pique, de Gaulle lectured Eisenhower on the symbolic importance of the city and threatened to remove all French forces from the front to reinforce the Strasbourg.⁷² Eisenhower recognized French goodwill was essential to maintaining the security of the exposed lines of communication which stretched across their country. He decided that Allied unity and continued French cooperation outweighed the risk. Although he hated to give in to de Gaulle's threats, he swallowed his pride and ordered the Sixth Army to hold Strasbourg.⁷³ Reflecting on the political contortions required to hold his coalition together, even in victory, he observed, "I jump from high military strategy to the lowest form of intrigue"⁷⁴

As a field commander, some of Eisenhower decisions also determined national military strategy. Ironically, Eisenhower had this increased power because of the coalition nature of his command. As inevitable in an alliance, there were many occasions where Churchill disagreed with Roosevelt. Predictably, in each of these, the CCS found itself similarly divided. Under these circumstances, a committee command structure styled after the British system of co-equal land, sea, and air component commanders would likely have suffered the same paralysis as the CCS because the individual component commanders and their subordinates would have been constrained to pursue

⁷²Morelock, 56; and Eisenhower, *Crusade*, 362-63.

⁷³Morelock, 56.

⁷⁴Eisenhower, *Letters*, 68.

courses of action in line with their national affiliations. It thus proved fortuitous that Eisenhower was able to convince the Allies to adopt the unified command structure. It was also fortunate that the individual who filled this position had his own clear strategic vision as well as the will to take decisive action.

When Churchill and Roosevelt could not agree on a course of action, each was forced to go to the first and only position in the chain of command where authority was focused in one person, the unified commander, to lobby their views. Eisenhower was only too willing and able to arbitrate between competing national interests. He exercised a unique power that derived from his position at the nexus of the allied war effort. He was able to do this because of a firm Allied commitment to unity and his own extraordinary position of trust.

Equally astonishing was the informal policy worked out between the unified commander and the heads of state regarding political oversight. Fortunately for Eisenhower, all the parties to the Alliance were committed to a decisive military end for Germany. Because of this clear prioritization of the military instrument of power, Eisenhower was able to negotiate the right, as field commander, to make all military decisions himself. Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to abide by his military decisions unless they could agree on a political imperative that trumped him. A personal message from Roosevelt and Churchill to Eisenhower during the Italian campaign reflects the level of freedom from operational and political constraints that he was granted: "We highly approve your decision to go on with AVALANCHE and to land an Airborne Division near Rome on the conditions indicated. We fully recognize that military

consideration must dominate at this juncture.”⁷⁵ Eisenhower was thus only partially limited from above, and had many opportunities to act on his own vision and judgment.

It was on the basis of this authority that Eisenhower made key several strategic and operational decisions that steered the war in Europe. Eisenhower decided to take the war to Italy via Sicily and Messina, rather than via Sardinia and Rome. He declared that OVERLORD would be *the* decisive operation of 1944 and would have priority for landing craft over the other theaters. He insisted on the ANVIL landings. He dictated the broad front strategy against Germany. His headquarters even drafted the terms of the German surrender.⁷⁶

At the operational level, Eisenhower was a firm believer in the power of joint and combined arms. However, he viewed joint warfare in a different light than did most airpower advocates. The example of the Transportation Plan highlights the fundamental difference in his vision. Eisenhower focused more on his own forces than on the enemy's. He preferred that all his forces work together on one immediate problem at a time, rather than pursue parallel strategic campaigns with differing objectives and long-term payoffs. His strategic center of gravity was his ability to mass and synchronize all efforts toward a single operational objective. For OVERLORD, his objective was success of the Normandy landings. This practice often blurred the lines between the levels of war, as well as the lines between the services.

⁷⁵Message from Roosevelt and Churchill to Eisenhower dated 2 September 1943, AFHQ Official Correspondence File, General Subject Series, Eisenhower Library.

⁷⁶Pogue, *Supreme Command*, 485.

Eisenhower also varied from most military thinkers at the higher level of warfare. On the strategic level, Eisenhower was an attritionist. He did not believe there was any magic button accessible by maneuver or craft that would cause the premature collapse of the German Reich. He was convinced they would continue to fight as long as they had forces in the field. For this reason he advocated the cross-channel invasion from the start, fought his campaigns as linear sweeps with broad fronts, and refused to bypass significant German military forces in the field. His strategic objective was the destruction of the German military. While the Ruhr was the stated geographic objective of his European campaign, he explained that it was only because the Germans would be compelled to defend it, and would thereby have to expose their military forces to attack.⁷⁷ His use of strategic airpower to tactically prepare Northern France for his invasion forces rather than pursue a strategic campaign against oil production is completely in synch with this strategic philosophy.

Eisenhower was deeply influenced by another strategic attritionist:

Many years ago I read Grant's report to the Secretary of War submitted, I think, on or about the middle of July, 1865. The first several paragraphs of that report impressed me mightily — in them the Commander traced out his general idea or his general plan for the defeat the Confederacy at the moment he was called upon to assume charge of all the Northern Armies. I think people frequently lose sight of the importance of this broad scheme which lies behind every move the Commander makes. As a consequence we see people—sometimes highly informed critics—attempting to separate one battle or one point of a campaign from the whole and in doing so they get completely out of focus.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Eisenhower, *Crusade*, 225.

⁷⁸Eisenhower, *Papers*, 8:1372-73.

Information Operations

Eisenhower's first significant contact with the press had been during the Louisiana Maneuvers. His picture appeared in the papers with the caption "Lieutenant Colonel D. D. Ersenbeing," but the story was flattering.⁷⁹ He held his first personal press conference on 25 June 1942, the day after his arrival in England as European Theater Commander. It drew a huge crowd of copy-hungry reporters. The small cadre of 55,000 Americans currently huddled in Britain for advance planning were at the time largely anonymous to the British public.⁸⁰ Eisenhower would be the one to put a face on this unknown animal, the American. He seized the opportunity.

Ike reached out to the press with flattery and cooperation. He had already come to know some of them in the course of his duties and called many of them by their first names. He publicly praised them for a playing a role vital to the war effort. Eisenhower genuinely believed that public understanding and support was essential for a democracy to successfully fight a war, and he knew that the first campaign he had to win in the ETO was the one for the hearts and minds of the English half of the Grand Alliance. He willingly posed for pictures and generated page after page of copy colored with peculiarly American aphorisms and Midwestern metaphors that the British found

⁷⁹Whitehead, 204.

⁸⁰Ambrose, 72.

irresistible.⁸¹ Ike even referred to the press as “quasi members of my staff,”⁸² which led one reporter to remark, “When Ike says ‘quasi’—I hope it isn’t a lisp.”⁸³

Eisenhower also took advantage of every public opportunity to state his case for the war and demonize the Nazis. His hands would wave with emphasis and his face redden with anger when he spoke of the enemy and what it would take to bring Hitler to his knees.⁸⁴ It was not an act. Eisenhower genuinely operated out of hatred for the Nazis, and, when he locked his eyes on the camera, his sincerity was unmistakable.

By D-Day, Eisenhower had 530 war correspondents assigned to SHAEF.⁸⁵ Ike established and maintained their goodwill by keeping them briefed on details of current and future operations⁸⁶ and permitting them unrestricted access to the front lines. With portable typewriters strapped to their backs, twenty-eight of these men accompanied soldiers in the first waves of landings at Normandy, and parachuted in with the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions (just like they had done in North Africa and Sicily).⁸⁷ Competition for such spots was intense.

Eisenhower held some unusual advantages with the press that permitted such a liberal policy. Newsmen were only permitted in the theater after being accredited by the

⁸¹Butcher, *My Three Years*, 14; and Ambrose, 73.

⁸²Ambrose, 73.

⁸³Whitehead, 204.

⁸⁴Ambrose, 72.

⁸⁵Whitehead, 205.

⁸⁶Butcher, *My Three Years*, xxv.

⁸⁷Whitehead, 203-212.

War Department's Office of War Information. This process conferred upon them the rank of "simulated captain," which permitted them to wear uniforms, use the PX, and eat in officers' mess facilities. But it also placed them under the threat of banishment or even court-martial should they bypass the censors or otherwise breach their trust. (Eisenhower took his role as chief censor very seriously and monitored both the tone and content of the traffic leaving his theater—more than once ejecting a reporter.) Eisenhower also enjoyed the unified support of an America galvanized by Pearl Harbor. These factors translated into a relatively friendly press corps, and Ike worked to keep them that way.

The war correspondents realized that their exceptional freedoms were a direct result of Eisenhower's policies, and they saw his attitude carry down to his subordinates. An example of SHAEF policy mirrored in its subordinate commands is Major General Clarence Huebner's greeting to his D-day correspondents:

I want you to regard yourselves as members of this unit. You will have complete freedom of movement and I want you to get all the information you can. . . . The people at home won't know what is happening unless you are given the information and I want them to know. You both know how to take care of yourselves. But if an unlucky shell should get you, we'll do all we can. If you're wounded, we'll take care of you. If you're killed, we'll bury you. So you have nothing to worry about.⁸⁸

Though he appeared to have an easy and natural way with the press, he found their maintenance and attention to be very laborious and draining. From North Africa, he wrote his wife:

I've got a press conference coming up. I hate the d--- things: because everything said is 'off the record'—and reporters keep plaguing you with 'can we quote you

⁸⁸Whitehead, 206.

on that??’—also they take an hour that I need for something else. I cut them out for a while, but that was resented, so I’ve gone back to one per week.⁸⁹

In the months before D-day, he confided: “Newsmen bothered me badly on one trip and now I try to go without letting anyone know.”⁹⁰ To reach the home front audience, Eisenhower, somewhat reluctantly, did war loan drives, blood drives, Army Hour radio spots, and photograph sessions.⁹¹ Hollywood executives even considered marketing his image, but he refused any money and any project that was not directly tied to the war effort.⁹² Despite his policy of liberal access and detailed operational briefings, Eisenhower was amazed that the press could still get the story wrong:

I’ve seen a number of books written on the Mediterranean campaign of 1942-43. Some are amusing and some fairly accurate. But reading any of them fills me with amazement to find that even reporters on the spot so frequently miss the true significance of what is happening in front of their eyes. I think most of us live by slogans, rules of thumb and shibboleths. So everything we say or do is colored accordingly.⁹³

Occasionally Eisenhower called in a favor from the press for a special circumstance, and he was almost always obliged. An example of Eisenhower’s goodwill with the media was the handling of Patton’s soldier-slapping incident. When Eisenhower first got word of Patton’s intemperate abuse of a soldier in Sicily, he ordered an investigation and wrote a personal letter to Patton admonishing him for his behavior. When the allegations inevitably leaked to the press, a council of correspondents came to

⁸⁹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 72.

⁹⁰Eisenhower, *Letters*, 177.

⁹¹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 179.

⁹²Eisenhower, *Letters*, 184.

⁹³Eisenhower, *Letters*, 177-78.

him and offered a deal—silence in exchange for Patton's relief. Ike so convincingly argued Patton's indispensable contributions to the war that, incredibly, they simply agreed to keep the story to themselves. It was two months before Drew Pearson, a correspondent who was not party to the agreement, ignited a firestorm of controversy by announcing the incident in an inflammatory radio broadcast.⁹⁴

A constant theme that permeated all of Eisenhower's contact with the media was Allied unity. Whenever he was congratulated on a victory, he steered reporters to his subordinates (carefully mentioning both the British and American commanders) and gave them the credit. His frequent visits to units in the field always included both a British and American unit, if not a Canadian, Australian, Polish, or French one as well. Eisenhower monitored the level of competition between his commanders and immediately "corrected" any story that questioned the contributions of or laid blame upon the units of another Allied country.

For the first month after D-day, Eisenhower enforced a strict policy of releasing only the total count of casualties, but not their national breakdown.⁹⁵ He knew, as did all the military and political leaders, that the United States was providing the brunt of the forces at this point in the war and was also suffering the great majority of the casualties. However, he did not want to emphasize that point with the public to diminish in any way

⁹⁴ Ambrose, 117.

⁹⁵ David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower: At War, 1943-1945* (New York: Random House, 1986), 360 (hereafter cited as *At War*).

the contributions of the other nations or to give fuel to critics of U.S. involvement in Europe. Once again, the press cooperated with his wishes.

Eisenhower relieved dozens of division and corps commanders for incompetence, lack of aggressiveness, battle fatigue, or lapses in judgment. The only time he came close to relieving one of his army group commanders was over a threat to Allied unity. Of all the things that the Supreme Commander put up with from Montgomery, the one incident which provoked Eisenhower's full fury was Monty's use of the press to make political hay against the Americans during the Battle of the Bulge. When the December 1944 German winter offensive through the Ardennes Forest sliced through the thin American lines and cut off General Bradley from two of his three armies, Eisenhower made the practical decision to place the isolated forces temporarily under Montgomery's command. But, in his thirst for glory and recognition as the overall ground commander, Montgomery played it up before the press as an example of the stalwart British rushing in to save the panic-stricken Americans. This was especially infuriating in light of the high casualties the Americans were then suffering. Eisenhower wrote a "him or me" letter to the CCS threatening to resign, but Montgomery abjectly apologized before it was sent.⁹⁶

It would be fair to say that Ike manipulated the press to sell his own message, but the core of that message was that Allied unity was the *sine qua non* of victory. He actively courted their favor and rewarded their trust with unrestricted access. In return, he received sympathetic treatment and a reliable conduit for his messages to the families

⁹⁶Ambrose, 178-179; and Mosley, 288-89.

back at home in America and England whose favor ultimately sustained him in his position of authority. In a very real sense, the press corps was part of Eisenhower's staff.

North Africa

Eisenhower's vision was a living and breathing thing that required constant nourishment. Ike was careful to keep his mind open and flexible by actively seeking out new information. He was disciplined enough to adjust his vision to fit the facts, rather than vice versa. With the cold reasoning of the scientific method, Eisenhower was determined to learn from every battlefield reversal or failure by objective analysis of its causes. However, he never failed to take upon himself full responsibility.

On 20 February 1943, as the Americans were still licking their wounds from their mauling at Kasserine Pass, Eisenhower stood up before the newsmen and assumed full responsibility for the defeat.⁹⁷ But he was determined that he, as well as his troops, would learn from their first blooding in battle and had already begun an exhaustive investigation. His method was to examine the evidence in person, dredge up every failure and shortcoming, including his own, and demand a positive action to address it. Eisenhower first looked to materiel.

The battlefield spoke clearly to Eisenhower of the inferiority of the American M3 tank and the ineffectiveness of the 37-millimeter antitank gun against newer German armor.⁹⁸ He ordered testing against captured German tanks and disseminated the results

⁹⁷Butcher Diaries, A 237.

⁹⁸Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:984.

to improve tank and tank destroyer tactics. He was awestruck with Rommel's effective use of antipersonnel landmines, and he wrote to Marshall pleading for increased minesweeping capability and for the U.S. Army to field a similar capability.⁹⁹ He ordered that "measures for discovery and removal of mines should not be confined to Engineer units. All combat forces should have their own elements trained in this work."¹⁰⁰ Next he examined human performance.

Eisenhower also found evidence of the inferiority of American military intelligence. His investigation revealed that his chief intelligence officer (G-2), Brigadier General Mockler-Ferryman, had relied exclusively on decoded intercepts of German encrypted communication (known by the codename ULTRA) to develop his estimates of German intentions and had ignored reconnaissance that clearly indicated an impending attack.¹⁰¹ Ferryman's interpretation of the ULTRA intercepts convinced him that the German's main attack would be to the north. As a result of decisions made by Alexander and Eisenhower based on this faulty intelligence estimate, U.S. forces were dispersed over too wide a front, and half of the U.S. 1st Armored Division was chewed up piecemeal by massed German forces totaling of 5,300 casualties, while the other half was held in reserve for an attack which never came.¹⁰² Ike also discovered that Ferryman had

⁹⁹Amazingly, the United States entered World War II without an operational landmine in the inventory. Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:985.

¹⁰⁰Butcher Diaries, A-271.

¹⁰¹Butcher Diaries, A-236.

¹⁰²Butcher Diaries, A-322.

been previously fired for "lack of imagination,"¹⁰³ a particular damning indictment for an intelligence officer. The Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces determined he would be better served with another G-2 and replaced him. His critical analysis of Ferryman's failures reveals his own view of how to maintain a current and accurate vision: "We need a G-2 who is never satisfied with his information, one who procures it with spies, reconnaissance, and any means available. . . . Mock has relied too heavily upon one source."¹⁰⁴ Eisenhower practiced this policy with himself and the formulation of his vision.

After investigating the truth of reports from II Corps that Major General Lloyd R. Fredendall was unable to extract adequate performance from his staff, was unfamiliar with conditions at the front, and had spent 24 hours in bed during the fight,¹⁰⁵ Eisenhower made an unemotional decision to relieve him. He also reluctantly relieved the commanding general of the First Armored Division, not for failure, but because of a battle-weariness which had set in which was impairing his confidence in command. In his letter to the new II Corps commander, Patton, Eisenhower explained the rationale he had adopted (and would use dozens of times in the future) for relief of subordinates.

You must not retain for one instant any man in a responsible position where you have become doubtful of his ability to do the job. We cannot afford to throw away soldiers and equipment and, what is even more important, effectiveness in defeating our [enemies], because we are reluctant to damage the feelings of old

¹⁰³Butcher Diaries, A-236.

¹⁰⁴Butcher Diaries, A-236, A-237.

¹⁰⁵Butcher Diaries, A-247, A-250, A-261.

friends. This matter frequently calls for more courage than any other thing you will have to do, but I expect you to be perfectly cold-blooded about it.¹⁰⁶

Eisenhower was similarly diligent in his investigations when things were going well. He interviewed squadron commanders on the combat performance of their aircraft and relayed the results in detailed reports.¹⁰⁷ He experimented with more aggressive air support and passed along the developing tactics up the chain of command.¹⁰⁸ Ike monitored technological developments closely and would pass his observations on to Marshall hoping to influence the procurement process. He studied the German successes in the desert war and concluded that a primary factor was the effectiveness of their 88-millimeter gun.¹⁰⁹ One of his most strident recommendations was that the Americans increase the caliber of their tank guns and develop an armor-piercing sabot round like British had done.¹¹⁰ Both Marshall and Eisenhower were proponents of the use of airborne troops and gliders.¹¹¹

After the campaign was successfully concluded, Eisenhower updated his vision with an objective analysis of what had transpired. All in all, he was not pleased with his performance in North Africa. Victory had taken too long and cost too many lives. Ike faulted himself for not planning the landings further to the east and driving more

¹⁰⁶Butcher Diaries, A-271-72.

¹⁰⁷Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:419.

¹⁰⁸Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:543.

¹⁰⁹Sixsmith, 30.

¹¹⁰Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1970, 1973.

¹¹¹Sixsmith, 133; and Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1975.

aggressively toward Tunis.¹¹² His wry description of the campaign, given while still grappling to get it under control, reveals his frustration: "I think the best way to describe our operations to date is that they have violated every recognized principal of war, are in conflict with all operational and logistic methods laid down in textbooks, and will be condemned in their entirety by all Leavenworth and War College classes for the next twenty-five years."¹¹³ However, Eisenhower had accomplished the most important strategic objective—holding the alliance together. With a victory finally under its belt, it was now stronger than ever.

Normandy

Eisenhower had been planning for the cross-channel invasion of Europe since February of 1942. By 6 June 1944, his campaign had fully crystallized in his mind. Much like Patton studied his Michelin road maps of Europe anticipating the war, Eisenhower had studied the geography and the enemy at a larger scale and formed a vision for the final campaign.¹¹⁴

Land on the Normandy coast.

Build up the resources needed for a decisive battle in the Normandy-Brittany region and break out of the enemy's encircling positions. (Land operations in the first two phases were to be under the tactical direction of Montgomery.)

Pursue on a broad front with two army groups, emphasizing the left to gain necessary ports and reach the boundaries of Germany and threaten the Ruhr.

¹¹²Ambrose, 107.

¹¹³Benjamin Franklin Cooling, "Dwight D. Eisenhower at the Army War College, 1927-1928," *Parameters* 5 (1975): 26-33.

¹¹⁴D'este, 4.

On our right we would link up with the forces that were to invade France from the south.

Build up our new base along the western border of Germany, by securing ports in Belgium and in Brittany as well as in the Mediterranean.

While building up our forces for the final battles, keep up an unrelenting offensive to the extent of our means, both to wear down the enemy and to gain advantages for the final fighting.

Complete the destruction of enemy forces west of the Rhine, in the meantime constantly seeking bridgeheads across the river.

Launch the final attack as a double envelopment of the Ruhr, again emphasizing the left, and follow this up by an immediate thrust through Germany, with the specific direction to be determined at the time.

Clean out the remainder of Germany.¹¹⁵

Surprisingly (or perhaps not), this is exactly how the campaign flowed.

Two weeks after his January 1944 arrival in London to take charge of SHAEF, Eisenhower determined that the existing OVERLORD plan developed by Morgan needed to be strengthened. His experiences in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy convinced him that he needed a wider front and more divisions in the first waves.¹¹⁶ He expressed his views in a message to the CCS, and his ground deputy, Montgomery, concurred.¹¹⁷ He immediately set about shaping it to more resemble his earlier ROUNDUP plan from 1943. He insisted that it be recognized and resourced as *the* decisive operation of 1944. The Americans, he believed, must put two divisions ashore in the first waves and would need a second beach (Utah) to do so. As time would tell, the U.S. forces would certainly have been in a much more precarious position on D-day had the hotly contested Omaha beach been their only landing site as per Morgan's plan.

¹¹⁵Eisenhower, *Crusade*, 228-9.

¹¹⁶Stoler, 314.

¹¹⁷Max Schoenfeld, "The Navies and NEPTUNE," *D-day 1944*, 102.

Eisenhower was determined to incorporate every possible advantage of emerging doctrine and technology in his plans for OVERLORD, NEPTUNE (the naval portion of the cross-channel attack), and FORTITUDE (the covering deception operation). By D-day, Ike had already fought and won the bitter battle for his Transportation Plan. Frogmen, using French Captain Jacques Cousteau's newly developed self-contained underwater breathing apparatus, were sent in the night before to clear Normandy beach obstacles.¹¹⁸ As part of the massive deception operation, a fleet of small boats with radar reflectors presented the picture of a false invasion fleet to German defenders near Pas de Calais, while squadrons of airplanes above dropped bundles of the top secret radar-obscuring WINDOW (chaff).¹¹⁹ Simultaneously, Patton's fictitious First U.S. Army Group, across the channel from the false landing site, began a huge barrage of misleading radio traffic to reinforce the deception.

Eisenhower made every effort to know his enemy, his own forces, and the terrain. After having suffered from poor military intelligence in North Africa, Eisenhower assembled a large and effective G-2 division headed by the supremely competent Major General Kenneth W. D. Strong. AFHQ and SHAEF's access to ULTRA intercepts of the enemy's secure radio transmissions, its vast array of aerial reconnaissance assets, and Strong's insightful analyses gave the Allied Commander a much better view of his opponent than they had of him.

¹¹⁸Robin Higham, "Technology at D-day," *D-day 1944*, 83.

¹¹⁹Higham, 89.

Though Eisenhower could never have more than intelligence estimates of the enemy's capabilities and dispositions, he knew he could build a definitive vision of his own. He believed the twin keys to the success of OVERLORD were a rapid penetration of the layered beach defenses and a sustained and rapid build up of Allied forces in the beachhead which had to outpace the German reinforcements. Thousands of people were at work on solving these problems, but Eisenhower's was the one mind which was responsible to coordinate all efforts to a common purpose. He made it a point to acquaint himself with the technology and tactics being developed for the invasion. He visited beach assault training sites in England.¹²⁰ He observed the design and construction of the giant pieces of artificial harbors which were to be dragged from Britain to Normandy with the invasion fleet.¹²¹ He even personally tested one of the innovative duplex-drive swimming tanks¹²² on a run through the water.¹²³

Eisenhower was already well versed in the capabilities of airpower and believed its proper use would be decisive. By D-day he had wrested temporary control of the strategic as well as tactical air forces and amassed an airborne army of nearly three full divisions. Over the passionate objections of his air deputy Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, who feared 70-percent casualties, Eisenhower decided to

¹²⁰Theodore A. Wilson, "Deposited on Fortune's Far Shore: The 2d Battalion, 8th Infantry," *D-day 1944*, 225.

¹²¹Higham, 90.

¹²²Schoenfeld, 93.

¹²³Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1713.

commit 20,000 airborne troops on a night drop to help him achieve an early salient toward the crucial port of Cherbourg. The troops met light resistance and the Mallory's dire predictions never materialized. Forty-nine days later, General Omar N. Bradley's COBRA plan would use the strategic air forces that Eisenhower had made available to finally punch a hole in the German lines and enable the Allied breakout from the beachhead. Eisenhower's vision of the utility, strength, and decisiveness of his airpower resources was proved to be correct.

One example of how Eisenhower built a an accurate vision of the terrain is his handling of the weather issue. An action for which he does deserve personal credit was taken shortly after his appointment to command OVERLORD. In February 1944 Eisenhower ordered that a special weather team be established at SHAEF. Using primitive computer technology (Hollerith punchcards), they began work on a climate and weather pattern analysis.¹²⁴ Eisenhower had faced marginal weather in the Sicily invasion and wanted to be prepared for the same at Normandy. He educated himself on weather theory and followed his meteorologists' operations closely. On 4 June 1944, another massive invasion force again waited on the commander to make the weather call. Eisenhower decided to hold for 24 hours. The next day, with only marginal improvements and a shaky forecast, he made the irreversible decision to launch the invasion on the sixth. This would prove to be decisive to success. On his fallback dates for the invasion (dictated by a favorable conjunction of sunrise and tides¹²⁵) the worst

¹²⁴Higham, 91.

¹²⁵Schoenfeld, 108.

storm in fifty years rocked the English Channel and destroyed large portions of the Allies artificial harbors and shipping.¹²⁶ Had Eisenhower not taken the calculated risk to proceed when he did, the result would likely have been a disastrous landing attempt, or a huge delay in the opening of the second front. Here again, the Supreme Commander profited from his positive action to improve his vision of his circumstances.

Eisenhower functioned as a sort of midwife to new tactics and technology. He shepherded the development of all promising ideas (including his own) into real advantages over the enemy. His meteorology team was just one of the many things he directly or indirectly brought to life on the battlefield. Of all the cards he played for OVERLORD, most came up bust. But his three aces, FORTITUDE, the Transportation Plan, and the weather team won him the pot.

The Bulge

When the Germans launched a devastating surprise offensive in the winter of 1944, Eisenhower was the first to recognize its magnitude and the first to readjust his thinking. While Bradley believed the attack was in response to his recent offensives and could be stopped without difficulty, Eisenhower strongly disagreed. "That's no spoiling attack!" he told Bradley and immediately ordered him to move Simpson's 9th Armored Division, and Patton's 10th Armored Division to the threatened sector.¹²⁷ He also ordered that every possible division along the entire front be freed up and committed to

¹²⁶Eisenhower, *Letters*, 189.

¹²⁷Morelock, 60.

the Ardennes sector. Eisenhower was confident enough of his analysis to commit his theater reserve, the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, to reinforce the forces holding the shoulders of the penetration.¹²⁸

Eisenhower had pursued a broad front strategy for the very reason that he believed a narrow thrust to be too vulnerable while the enemy possessed a mobile, armored reserve. When the Germans decided to come out from behind the Siegfried Line and expose their armored reserve, he saw it as opportunity rather than disaster. On 17 December, the day after the attack began, he wrote in a letter that "If things go well we should not only stop the thrust but should be able to profit from it."¹²⁹ He immediately implemented the counter-moves to contain the penetration and then exploit it by counter-attacks into the flanks. Eisenhower's decisive response and positive outlook during this period set the tone for his subordinates and stilled the panic that had begun to rise from the initial confusion and losses. At a 19 December meeting of his principle subordinates in Verdun, Eisenhower announced, "The present situation is to be regarded as one of opportunity for us and not of disaster. There will be only cheerful faces at this conference table."¹³⁰

The German salient progressed to the point of dividing Bradley's forces in two. Eisenhower urged Bradley to move his headquarters north of the salient so he could control his most threatened forces—the Ninth Army and the bulk of the First Army.

¹²⁸Morelock, 60.

¹²⁹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2355.

¹³⁰Morelock, 63.

Bradley refused, instead choosing to stay in the south with Patton to lead the planned counter-attack.¹³¹ Eisenhower sensed incipient panic in the retreating First Army and decided he needed better command and control of his disorganized forces to the north. On the 19th came word that 10,000 men of the 106th Infantry Division near St. Vith had surrendered.¹³² Practicing the devotion to the alliance that he always preached, Eisenhower disregarded nationality and assigned the American First and Ninth Armies to Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army Group in the North. Probably at no other time did Eisenhower act more like a true Allied Commander.

The decision wounded Bradley and American pride (especially after Montgomery tried to cover himself in glory in the newspapers), but it was clearly appropriate from an Allied perspective. While Bradley maintained it was unnecessary to his dying day, he did concede that if Montgomery had been an American, it would have been the right thing to do.¹³³ Rather than being naïve to the political dimension, Eisenhower recognized that the Ardennes Offensive was intended to crack the Alliance as much as it was designed to physically divide the forces. It was a last gamble by Hitler to split the seams of Anglo-American unity and nullify their cooperative effort on his western flank. But Eisenhower had built a more solid coalition than Hitler had calculated and made the tough call required to preserve it when it was required. Historian Chester Wilmot observed of Eisenhower's performance at this critical juncture, "In all his career as Supreme

¹³¹Morelock, 64.

¹³²*At War*, 570.

¹³³Morelock, 75.

Commander there was perhaps no other time when Eisenhower revealed so clearly the greatness of his qualities.”¹³⁴

¹³⁴Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 116.

CHAPTER 5

THE MORAL LEADER

Military power wins battles, but spiritual power wins wars.¹

George C. Marshall

The Need

The environment in which the joint and combined force commander operates is exceedingly complex. Limited authority, conflicting loyalties, indefinite chains of command, competing political interests, the corruptive influence of power, and the potential of career-ending fallout from every action can entrap, paralyze, or confound those who lack a guiding vision or have a weakly constituted character. The tremendous responsibilities and tasks of strategic generalship require a leader to use every means at his disposal to influence the great cloud of people around him whose activities he must organize to a common purpose.

Military leaders are usually most comfortable operating strictly within the military realm. Most confine their leadership and influence to the military sphere. Some in the higher echelons tap into the informational, economic, and even political instruments of power. Eisenhower's military upbringing and exposure gave him tremendous skills and access within each of these areas. But he also operated with tremendous success in a fifth realm—moral authority. His ability to capitalize on the moral instrument of power

¹Spanoudis, *Quotations*.

devolved from his attainment of a prominent position of trust with the governments, militaries, and public citizenry of nations on both sides of the Atlantic.

Conventional wisdom dictates that one should step cautiously into such a large arena with slyness of motive and guarded vulnerabilities. But Eisenhower, with unsophisticated Kansas honesty and humility, strode confidently into the fray. His manner abhorred every principle of Machiavellian authority. Instead he cultivated absolute transparency in himself and his command structure. Having totally disarmed himself in this way, he proceeded to win over the trust and support of every person and institution he encountered with his openness and integrity. This risky and unreasonable approach won Eisenhower favor with his superiors and subordinates and with intractable personalities like de Gaulle and Stalin. It also earned him an unmatched relationship with the press whereby both profited immensely.

The key to Eisenhower's success in the moral realm was legitimacy. This legitimacy derived from his personality, his presence, and his personal responsibility. Eisenhower was a man of virtue whose transparent integrity was obvious to all. He was also an extremely effective general whose competence and confidence earned him the trust of presidents, prime ministers, and privates. He had a radiant personal charisma without a trace of the arrogance that so commonly accompanies great leaders. His selflessness and humility promoted sympathetic action from Allied soldiers and citizens. He kept to a murderous travel schedule to maintain his visibility, presence, and influence throughout his theater. He consistently reached out to his troops with real efforts to lift their morale. This legitimacy permitted Eisenhower to carry out unprecedented policies

of unity and equality in accordance with his well-defined personal moral vision of the war.

Moral Vision

Other men of great influence, like Churchill, had already painted the war as a heroic crusade to liberate Europe from a dark oppression. This moral context was generally accepted by the populations of all the Allied nations. Eisenhower's own vision for the war was also intrinsically moral. In his heart, he genuinely believed the western Allies were engaged in a righteousness struggle against the very embodiment of evil. He personally hated Hitler and the Nazis. In April of 1943 he wrote to his son John:

I have one earnest conviction in this war. It is that no other war in history has so definitely lined up the forces of arbitrary oppression and dictatorship against those of human rights and individual liberty. My single passion is to do my full duty in helping to smash the disciples of Hitler.²

By the power of his charismatic personality, he was able to recruit others to his vision and shape his staffs and subordinates into a reasonable semblance of himself. He was not just the military commander, but the spiritual leader of the Allied crusade against the Nazis. He imposed a quasi-religion upon the European theater whose highest values were unity, integrity, and loyalty.

Eisenhower was much quicker than other military figures to reach across national or ideological boundaries in the pursuit of the collective good. His unquestioned personal integrity also allowed him to politically survive such contact, though sometimes by

²Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:1084.

narrow margins. In this way, he was able to count equally as brothers the British, the Soviets, the Vichy French, and anyone else who would take arms with him against the Nazis. In his progressive view, he was able to rationalize dealing with the Nazi collaborator Admiral Jean Francois Darlan in North Africa in order to save Allied lives and hasten the campaign against the Germans. He was similarly able to justify dealing directly with Nazi Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart in Holland late in the war in order to secure his northern flank and save the Dutch from starvation.³

Eisenhower's moral vision, just like its other components, was flexible, pragmatic, and subject to continuous refinement. His moral vision was a progressive one in that it was adaptable to the circumstances and was largely unhindered by prejudices of race, nationality, and history. The one overarching moral principle by which he consistently evaluated people and actions was winning the war. His ability to convert others to his point of view permitted his aggressive military diplomacy and political marriages of convenience. Eisenhower's integration of black soldiers into white infantry units following the Ardennes Offensive best illustrates the progressive and courageous nature of his moral vision.

Legitimacy

Chief among Eisenhower's defining personal character traits was integrity. Marshall recognized the contribution of his character to his success in a postwar letter:

³Pogue, *Supreme Command*, 457-459.

There are a great many men of wisdom and of courage, men of reputation in the world, but your combination of these qualities together with a rare ability to work harmoniously with other people and control their efforts, capped by an outstanding quality in the high degree of integrity which has characterized your every action, makes you rather unique in the world.⁴

Marshall was clearly impressed with a leadership style founded on integrity. Eisenhower had only rare opportunities in the war to demonstrate great physical courage, but his moral courage in dealing with others was undisputed and is what made him the man of “courage” and “reputation” to which Marshall referred.

Eisenhower had many chances to profit politically and financially from his position of trust, but he refused to use his position of power to aid himself or his family. When his son John graduated from West Point, Ike declined to intervene on his behalf in order to get him a more favorable or safe assignment. To Mamie he wrote, “So far as John is concerned, we can do nothing but pray.”⁵ Even though nearly every one of his 319 letters home revealed his loneliness for his wife, Eisenhower refused to grant himself a special privilege he denied to others. He wrote to her, “I cannot allow, as a matter of policy, wives of soldiers to come into this theater. Consequently, I couldn’t allow you to come because it would be taking advantage of my own position.”⁶

While other generals developed political ambitions, Eisenhower swore off politics for the duration. After MacArthur was publicly embarrassed by the release of some letters indicating his consideration of a Presidential bid, Eisenhower wrote to his wife:

⁴Mosley, 463.

⁵Eisenhower, *Letters*, 220.

⁶Eisenhower, *Letters*, 146.

“No wartime soldier can retain his military effectiveness if he becomes tied up, in the public mind, with political problems.”⁷ On another occasion he related to her his concept of apolitical loyalty:

I laughed recently when I saw a statement in the paper that you could not inform a reporter as to which political party I belong. Neither could I!!! ... I truly hope that no soldier, no matter who he be—will be so misguided as to desert his post of duty in this war to engage in political affairs. All soldiers have one Commander-in-Chief; the President. Duty and loyalty and unity—all absolutely essential now to our future as a nation, demand that soldiers tend to their own jobs—exclusively!⁸

As early as October 1943, various groups began urging him to announce himself as a candidate for the Presidency. His typically emotional reply (“I ain’t and won’t!”)⁹ betrayed how strongly he felt that partisan politics and generalship did not mix.

Eisenhower had other chances to capitalize on his growing fame. When a Hollywood studio offered to buy the rights to his biography, Eisenhower flatly refused: “My own convictions as to the quality of a man that will make money out of a public position of trust are very strong! I couldn’t touch it.”¹⁰

Another manifestation of integrity was his transparent honesty. Eisenhower carefully explained his agenda and allegiances to all parties, and never faltered in his loyalty to his bosses or his subordinates. He was very conscious of this quality of

⁷Eisenhower, *Letters*, 176.

⁸Eisenhower, *Letters*, 216.

⁹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1535.

¹⁰Eisenhower, *Letters*, 190.

openness and consciously cultivated it in himself and his staffs as a mechanism to promote unity.

The method that I have used is brutal frankness The second anyone brings up an idea that sounds to me as if it represented a purely national rather than a United Nations attitude or viewpoint, I challenge him openly on the spot. . . . I constantly watch for any flare-ups that might endanger the work so far done and I think that everyone knows, both British and American, I would ruthlessly eliminate any man who violates my instructions and my convictions on this point.¹¹

In nearly every position he held in his career, people responded instinctively to the paternal aura of benevolent authority which Eisenhower radiated. When he severely injured his knee playing football at West Point, he turned instead to coaching the junior varsity football team and leading pep rallies.¹² His skills as a leader of peers were immediately obvious to all.

After his graduation in 1915, he was ordered to Fort Sam Houston at the express request of Major General Frederick Funston, the hero of the Philippine Insurrection.¹³ General Funston asked Eisenhower to coach the football team he had formed within the 19th Infantry Regiment. His reputation as a skilled coach soon gave him some name recognition within the Army. He was again detailed specifically to coach football in the fall of 1924 in Fort Meade, MD.¹⁴ In the intervening years he served as instructor of new officers at Fort Oglethorpe and Fort Leavenworth, instructor of tank tactics at Camp Colt and Fort Meade, commanding officer of Camp Colt, and executive officer to General Fox

¹¹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 2:928.

¹²Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 23, 26.

¹³Bender, 17-18.

¹⁴Bender, 38.

Conner in Camp Guillard in the Philippines.¹⁵ In this succession of positions he perfected his subordinate leadership skills as well.

Eisenhower's maturity and perspective also allowed him to approach his seniors with confidence, and build close relationships with them from which he profited. It was his friend Patton, several years his senior, who first introduced Eisenhower to General Fox Conner.¹⁶ Conner's paternal friendship and mentoring paved the way for his exceptional performance at Leavenworth and his close professional relationships with MacArthur, Quezon, Marshall, Roosevelt, and Churchill. As unified commander, Eisenhower recognized the importance of human relationships as both the lifeblood and the Achilles' heel of his vast military machine.

Much has been said about Eisenhower's optimism. Eisenhower was less an optimist than a confident and enthusiastic pragmatist. He had a very healthy respect for the skill of his opponent and the magnitude of the challenge before him, but believed that there were always solutions to be found by the bold, innovative, and skillful. He tried to create an environment conducive to creativity and success in his headquarters.

Commander Harry Butcher, Eisenhower's Naval Aide, offered this glimpse into his method:

What concerned the Commanding General most was the cultivation of determined enthusiasm and optimism in every member of his staff and every subordinate commander. He refused to tolerate pessimism or defeatism and urged anyone who could not rise above the recognized obstacles to ask for instant release from this theater. He urged the greatest informality in the staff work, put himself at the

¹⁵Bender, 17-38.

¹⁶Ambrose, 37.

disposition of his subordinates, but told them they are free to solve their own problems and not get into the habit of passing the buck to him. . . . It was emphasized that no set scheme of organization, training, or concept of command was to prevail over common sense and in adjusting our means to meet our needs. Absolute freedom in planning to meet our requirements has been granted this headquarters. This imposes a corresponding responsibility to act decisively and promptly and with no alibis.¹⁷

Eisenhower expected success from his subordinates, but he was flexible as to their means.

His positive thinking was of a very rational type and did not lead him to careless action. In operational planning, he balanced risk with opportunity at Pantelleria, Sicily, Salerno, Normandy, the breakout, and MARKET-GARDEN. In fact, he privately lamented that he had taken counsel of his fears and erred to the conservative side for both TORCH and HUSKY by not planning his North Africa landings closer to Tunisia or his Sicily landings at Messina.¹⁸ But, regardless of the outcome of each battle, his confidence in ultimate victory never wavered.

Under the pressure and strain of the war, Eisenhower was, in front of his armies, "a living dynamo of energy, good humor, amazing memory for details, and amazing courage for the future."¹⁹ But he suffered in private. Ike often revealed the strains upon him in emotional outbursts to his staff. Butcher described him in a fit of temper over inaction at the front "like a blind dog in a meathouse."²⁰ On another occasion,

¹⁷Butcher, *My Three Years*, 7.

¹⁸Ambrose, 107.

¹⁹Ambrose, 88.

²⁰Eisenhower, *Letters*, 189.

Eisenhower was “a caged tiger, snarling and clawing to get things done.” A February letter home from North Africa reveals this duality: “Yesterday was a bad one— everything was hard, and all the news bad! It takes a lot at time to keep the old grin going. . . . While my head may get bloody, it’s never bowed.”²¹

In January of 1944 when Eisenhower addressed his SHAEF staff as the newly installed Supreme Allied Commander, he boldly declared of the cross-channel invasion, “This operation is being planned as a success. There are no contingency plans.”²² Yet history has preserved the tortuously hand-scrawled statement Ike had prepared to announce to the world the failure of the Normandy landings:

Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.²³

But even faced with the possibility of disaster, Eisenhower’s reflex was to rally his forces and look for opportunity. He felt it important to frequently communicate to the lowest private in the theater his vision for victory. His Order of the Day to his forces fighting the Battle of the Bulge communicated his genuine belief that this bloody surprise attack by the Germans could be turned to Allied advantage.

By rushing out from his fixed defenses the enemy has given us the chance to turn his great gamble into his worst defeat. So I call upon every man, of all the Allies, to rise now to new heights of courage, of resolution and of effort. Let everyone

²¹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 87.

²²Pogue, *Supreme Command*, 222.

²³Butcher, *My Three Years*, xxviii.

hold before him a single thought—to destroy the enemy on the ground, in the air, everywhere—destroy him! United in this determination and with unshakable faith in the cause for which we fight, we will, with God's help, go forward to our greatest victory.²⁴

It is apparent that Eisenhower was a realist who diligently sought out all the available facts and incorporated them into his vision. It is also clear that he never wavered in his belief that the Allies would ultimately defeat the Nazis, if not via the beaches of Normandy, then elsewhere. While not personally fitting the definition of an optimist, Eisenhower's confidence and unquestionable sincerity of belief in the righteousness of the Allied cause engendered optimism in those around him.

Eisenhower took great pains to put himself before his men in a visible position of leadership, and to keep an accurate vision for the conditions of his subordinates. This required frequent trips of the front lines and rear areas. In the four months before D-day, he visited 26 divisions, 24 airfields, five warships, and countless other installations, carefully dividing his time between units of the British, American, and the other allied nations.²⁵ At his headquarters, he would invite two or three subordinates to join him each night for dinner, rotating between the British and the Americans, as a means of keeping in touch with his staff.²⁶ General Raymond S. McClain, XIX Corps commander, revealed how far Eisenhower's reach extended: "As a corps commander, I frequently felt his personal influence, and I know, too, that my division commanders and even some of

²⁴Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2370.

²⁵Ambrose, 129.

²⁶Eisenhower, *Letters*, 70.

my regimental and battalion commanders, on occasion, also felt his personal presence and influence.”²⁷

After touring American units, Eisenhower would often publish circular letters for general distribution that highlighted observed deficiencies in the treatment or facilities of the enlisted men, and reiterated his policies for fairness and discipline within his theater. Typical of his comments were his admonitions to subordinate commanders to maintain “neat and homelike barracks” for their men, for all American troops to monitor their “appearance and carriage” on and off post, and for each Allied soldier to consider themselves to be a “representative of his government.”²⁸ On ten occasions—including D-day, the closing of the Falaise Pocket, and the Battle of the Bulge—he wrote a personal message in the form of an Order of the Day to each individual soldier in the theater expressing his vision of the gravity and opportunity of the moment, and exhorting them to do their utmost.²⁹

Eisenhower took his duties as chief morale officer very seriously. On the eve of the D-Day invasion, he paid a visit to the U.S. 101st Airborne Division. He felt a special obligation and responsibility toward his airborne forces because he had chosen to send them on a particularly hazardous mission. Against the advice of Air Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory who feared terrible losses, Ike had decided to employ his airborne forces in a massive night drop to help pave the way for the landing, and open the door toward

²⁷Morelock, 21.

²⁸Eisenhower, *Papers* 2:924.

²⁹Ambrose, 151.

the port of Cherbourg.³⁰ He was much relieved when the casualty report, though substantial, was much less than forecast.³¹ His own morale was linked to his soldiers. He explained to his wife: "Our soldiers are wonderful. It always seems to me that the closer to the front the better the morale and the less the grumbling. No one knows how I like to roam around among them—I'm always cheered up by a day with the actual fighters."³² This degree of visibility and influence throughout the European Theater of Operations was a marked departure from the reclusiveness of World War I generals. Eisenhower was only able to sustain this level of influence by incurring personal risk and by the tremendous expenditure of personal energy. Yet, he felt it his obligation as leader to be seen by his men.

Eisenhower had great compassion for the common soldier. As a young officer, he was required to inspect the enlisted men's mess halls. Rather than just inspecting the pots and pans for cleanliness as was the habit of most officers, he believed that "food is part of a soldier's pay, and it is my determination to see that none of his pay is going to be counterfeit."³³ To that end he took the extraordinary step of volunteering for Cooks and Bakers School to learn something about food preparation itself. He thereafter added flavor and appearance to the standards for his inspections.

³⁰Ambrose, 134-35.

³¹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 187-88.

³²Eisenhower, *Letters*, 150.

³³Edward and Candace Russoli, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: General, President, and Cook* (Allentown, PA: Benedettini Books, 1990), 7-8.

Ike's letters home to Mamie during the war were filled with his admiration for service and suffering of his men. "Anyone in this war that has any slightest temptation to bemoan his lot or feel sorry for himself should visit the front line soldier!"³⁴ He expressed similar convictions both privately and publicly on scores of occasions. No one held greater esteem in Eisenhower's eyes than the front line soldier. Rather than glorying in war, he deplored its brutality and tragedy. He was very mindful of what each combat death meant back home.

It is a terribly sad business to total up the casualties each day—even in an air war—and to realize how many youngsters are gone forever. A man must develop a veneer of callousness that lets him consider such things dispassionately; but he can never escape a recognition of the fact that back home the news brings anguish and suffering to families all over the country. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives and friends must have a difficult time preserving any comforting philosophy and retaining a belief in the eternal rightness of things. War demands real toughness of fiber—not only in the soldiers that must endure, but in the homes that must sacrifice their best.³⁵

On the 20th anniversary of D-day, Walter Cronkite asked Eisenhower what he thought about when he returned to Normandy. Ike could have mentioned the great armada of forces, the heroism of the commanders, his success in deceiving the Germans. Instead, his answer revealed how different he was from other generals. He said he could never come to this spot without thinking of how blessed he and Mamie were to have grandchildren, and how much it saddened him to think of all the couples in America who had never had that blessing, because their only son was buried in France.³⁶ The care with

³⁴Eisenhower, *Letters*, 215.

³⁵Eisenhower, *Letters*, 175-76.

³⁶Ambrose, 129.

which his headquarters handled inquiries from concerned mothers, letters from well-wishers, and casualty notifications communicated that kind of fatherly concern for his men to families back in the States during the war.³⁷ Their support was one of the pillars of his success.

Eisenhower accepted absolute responsibility for every decision and activity within his theater. While he was quick to share the credit, he never shared the blame, but took it all upon himself. Eisenhower was acutely aware of both his authority and his responsibility as unified commander, this policy was his unwritten contract of loyalty to his subordinates and superiors. No incident tested him more than that of Darlan and the Vichy French.

Eisenhower was actually a third party to the Darlan deal for which he suffered so much grief. President Roosevelt was the first to reach out to the Vichy French via Robert D. Murphy, his unofficial "ambassador" to North Africa, in hopes that they would abandon the Germans and allow the Allies to land unmolested.³⁸ Ike's deputy, Mark Clark, actually had the mission to negotiate terms. Clark struck a deal with Darlan, the least savory of two Vichy leaders, when he realized he was the one with the greater influence.

Though the arranged treaty was a military success, it was a near political catastrophe. When the press played up the angle that Eisenhower was negotiating with

³⁷Eisenhower, *Letters*, 223.

³⁸Eisenhower, *Letters*, 31.

Nazi collaborators in North Africa, it nearly cost him his job. Neither Roosevelt nor Churchill had anticipated the hailstorm of controversy this pragmatic move had precipitated. Eisenhower's practical morality had been equally unoffended by the deal in consideration of its realized benefit in saving lives. Wriggling under the microscope of public scrutiny, he responded to the vicious charges: "I can't understand why these long-haired, starry-eyed guys keep gunning for me, I'm no reactionary. Christ on the Mountain! I'm as idealistic as Hell."³⁹

While both heads of state made moves to distance themselves from the decision, Eisenhower shielded Clark and carried the burden himself. Eisenhower's persuasive arguments at Casablanca and the ultimate assassination of Darlan helped calm the waters and keep him in command. But he had proved his mettle to his subordinates. He reflected on his weighty responsibility:

Loneliness is the inescapable lot of a man holding such a job. . . . [O]nly one man, in his own mind and heart, can decide 'Do we, or do we not?' The stakes are always highest, and the penalties are expressed in terms of loss of life or major or minor disaster to the nation.⁴⁰

Eisenhower was possessed of a genuine humility instilled at home and modeled by his father. On the occasion of his father's death in March 1942, Ike, unable to attend the funeral, instead closed his office door and wrote a personal eulogy. He described his dad as "undemonstrative, quiet, modest He was an uncomplaining person in the face of adversity, and such plaudits as were accorded him did not inflate his ego."⁴¹ The

³⁹Ambrose, 84.

⁴⁰Eisenhower, *Letters*, 94-95.

⁴¹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:184.

younger Eisenhower was certainly ambitious, but it was ambition without arrogance.

Even at the peak of his meteoric rise, his ability and success were never overshadowed by his ego, such as happened to men like Montgomery and Patton. Those around him responded warmly to his self-effacing manner.

Marshall specifically tested Eisenhower motives in March of 1942 by cruelly taunting him about how he was going to be strapped to a desk for the duration of the war. As the Chief of Staff, he assured him that he would suffer in promotion compared to those with combat commands. Eisenhower's response revealed both his strong ambition, and his genuine heart for service. He shot back,

General, I'm interested in what you say, but I want you to know that I don't give a damn about your promotion plans as far as I'm concerned. I came into this office from the field and I am trying to do my duty. I expect to do so as long as you want me here. If that locks me to a desk for the rest of the war, so be it!⁴²

Eisenhower thought he caught the trace of a smile on the Chief's lips as he stormed out of his office. One week later, Ike was wearing a third star courtesy of Marshall's recommendation to the President.

On 8 June 1942 Eisenhower drafted a memorandum for Marshall defining the role of the American commander for the European theater of operations. He had no realistic expectation that he would ever be that commander. In fact, he had specifically recommended someone else to Marshall for the job, and had dutifully pointed out all his

⁴²Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 248-250.

qualifications.⁴³ Three days later Marshall ordered him to fill the job description he had just written.

Part of Eisenhower's comprehensive vision was that of his place in the world. He ranked people by their sacrifices on behalf of others. He greatly respected the military abilities of men like MacArthur and Patton, but he had no stomach for their thirst for glory. He had the greatest of respect for Marshall and once observed that he “wouldn’t trade one Marshall for fifty MacArthurs!”⁴⁴ Wearied by the prima donna personalities of men like de Gaulle, Patton, and Montgomery, Eisenhower confided to his wife, how much he hated dealing with people who imposed on him to help their personal ambitions.⁴⁵ As to himself, he said: “All these people will keep working for me at top speed as long as they are convinced I’m completely selfless, and devoted to the single purpose of winning the war. But let them get the idea that I’m using them, or this position, to glorify myself, and the whole thing will go flop.”⁴⁶

While he was objectively aware of his contributions to the war, he knew he was not irreplaceable: “In a war such as this, when high command invariably involves a president, a prime minister, six chiefs of staff, and a horde of lesser ‘planners,’ there has got to be a lot of patience—no one person can be a Napoleon or a Caesar.”⁴⁷ Even after

⁴³Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:327.

⁴⁴Ambrose, 62.

⁴⁵Eisenhower, *Letters*, 117.

⁴⁶Eisenhower, *Letters*, 140.

⁴⁷Ambrose, 66.

winning the war, Eisenhower kept his perspective. In his Guildhall address to London, England in 1945, he once again deflected the glory to others in one of his most memorable speeches. He managed to sum up his leadership philosophy in a single sentence: "Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends."⁴⁸

Moral Policy

Eisenhower's moral authority extended beyond his personal influence. He used his personal moral authority to enact theater-wide policies that carried his moral vision to this greater audience and shaped his forces into his own image. Two policies that best demonstrate the courageous and progressive nature of Eisenhower's moral vision are Allied unity and racial integration.

Eisenhower, more than any other military leader in the war, appreciated the overarching strategic supremacy of Allied unity. He knew the historical weaknesses of coalitions and correctly anticipated that Germany would try to exploit them by trying to cut individual nations from the herd in order to negotiate a separate peace. He did not leave the development and maintenance of unity to the politicians, but engaged in an active campaign to instill a spirit of cooperation across the entire alliance. His success was founded on establishing a spirit of trust and cooperation among his staff, his senior leaders, his forces in the field, and his constituent nations.

⁴⁸ *At War*, 823.

Eisenhower had no reputation with the British, but had to start from scratch.

Admiral Cunningham, who Eisenhower would eventually regard as his good friend,⁴⁹

described how Eisenhower established moral authority with the British commanders.

At that time when we were all unknown to each other, I have no doubt most of us were posing the question: "What sort of a man is this American General who has been entrusted with the command of the great enterprise?" It was not long before we discovered that our Commander was a man of outstanding integrity, transparent honesty and frank almost to an embarrassing degree. . . . No one will dispute it when I say that no one man has done more to advance the Allied cause.⁵⁰

Eisenhower established and maintained warm and loyal relationships with members of the entire strata of the British command structure including the Prime Minister, statesmen, RAF generals, Royal Navy admirals, diplomats, and the press. Only Brooke and Montgomery, covetous of Eisenhower's authority as Supreme Commander, failed to be swayed by him. If these relationships were never warm, they were, however, always professional and always engaged.

In his last note to President Manuel Quezon before he left the Philippines in 1939,

Eisenhower recorded his views on the relationship of unity and morale within an army:

Morale is born of loyalty, patriotism, discipline, and efficiency, all of which breed confidence in self and in comrades. Most of all morale is promoted by unity—unity in service to the country and in determination to attain the strongest, and the most delicate of growths. It withstands shocks, even disasters of the battlefield, but can be destroyed utterly by favoritism, neglect, or injustice. . . . The army should not be coddled or babied, for that does not produce morale, it merely condones and encourages inefficiency. But the army should be taught to respect itself and to render a quality of service that will command respect throughout the nation.⁵¹

⁴⁹Eisenhower, *Letters*, 170.

⁵⁰Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1748.

⁵¹Sixsmith, 11.

To enforce his vision for Allied unity, Eisenhower needed cooperative subordinates. He was in the advantageous position of being able to personally select division, corps, and army commanders from names supplied by Marshall and McNair, sometimes with advice from Bradley or Bedell Smith, his chief of staff.⁵² He generally took the professional competence of the candidates for granted, and made his choices on the basis of honesty and reliability. Once installed, he demanded absolute professional competence as well and was quick to discipline or relieve any American who lost his confidence in any of these areas. His disciplinary sessions display his paternal approach to leadership: "All my conferences this morning have been of the irritating type. People have misquoted me, others have enlarged on my instructions, still others have failed to obey orders. So I had a big field day and ended up by tanning a few hides."⁵³

The harshest of his few recorded criticisms were reserved for those who were untrustworthy or communicated facts later found to be in error. In his February 1945 ranking of generals, Eisenhower placed Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, an army group commander, at number 24 of 38, behind many officers who filled positions of lesser responsibility. His name alone rated negative comments about his often inaccurate statements and evaluations.⁵⁴ Interesting, Eisenhower described Devers' cardinal sin as a failure to produce unity:

⁵²Morelock, 20.

⁵³Eisenhower, *Letters*, 173-74.

⁵⁴Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2466-69.

The proper position of this officer is not yet fully determined in my own mind. The over-all results he and his organization produce are generally good, sometimes outstanding. But he has not, so far, produced among the seniors of the American organization here that feeling of trust and confidence that is so necessary to continued success.⁵⁵

Eisenhower took much criticism from his American subordinates for being so impartial as to show favoritism to the British. If it is possible to carry impartiality to extremes, Eisenhower was even guiltier in his 26 December 1944 decree, which integrated black soldiers into white infantry units. Ike had a longstanding commitment to equal treatment of his soldiers regardless of race.

Eisenhower first dealt with race issues while on Marshall's staff. The official Army policy of the day was segregation without discrimination: "While segregation is essential to morale and harmony of both white and colored troops, segregation as practiced in the army is that of physical separation of military units and not that of inferior or superior groups."⁵⁶ Colored soldiers were assigned to colored units (usually with white officers), but those units were theoretically deployable and interchangeable with their white counterparts. When American units began to deploy to Australia and other countries in 1942, many of the governments objected to black soldiers. The Australians claimed it was against their constitution.⁵⁷ The deployment of black soldiers became an international problem involving the State Department.

⁵⁵Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2468-69.

⁵⁶Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:208-211.

⁵⁷Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:208-211.

Eisenhower prepared a memorandum on the subject of "The Colored Troop Problem" which tabulated the objections of about twenty different nations, primarily in the Pacific and South America.⁵⁸ Since the Army did not have the manning at this point in time to selectively deploy units, and because Australia and the other countries were in no position to be choosy, Eisenhower hit upon a simple solution. He wrote a formal letter informing the country that no other troops were available and then promised to recall the colored troops. After some frantic exchanges with the government, the Australians agreed to allow the Negro troops entry. Similar "temporary" arrangements were worked out with most other nations as well.

As Allied Commander, Eisenhower was in a position to make unofficial moral policy on the race question. As early as July 1942 Eisenhower put himself on the record for equal treatment of black soldiers. When curious English reporters asked to see the colored troops, Eisenhower obliged. As background, he told them his policy for handling black soldiers would be absolute equality of treatment, but with segregation where facilities permitted. "The colored troops were to have everything as good as the white."⁵⁹ He was very concerned over any reported incidents of violence and inspected the service and recreation facilities at troubled units during his frequent tours. He published his observations and policies in letters, which he directed to be circulated to "every American of every service and classification that is serving under my command in this Theater."⁶⁰

⁵⁸Eisenhower, *Papers*, 1:208-211.

⁵⁹Butcher, *My Three Years*, 20.

⁶⁰Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1749-50.

A typical excerpt from one of these letters published ten months before the Battle of the Bulge reads: "Equal opportunities of service and recreation are the right of every American soldier regardless of branch, race, color or creed."⁶¹ It is clear that issues of race and equality were on his mind long before the urgency of the Battle of the Bulge.

In December 1944, when a surprise German offensive through the Ardennes threatened to buckle the American lines, Eisenhower swiftly redeployed units to shore up the shoulders and block the penetration. As the need for replacements climbed due to the high casualties, he made the historic decision to solicit black soldiers, who generally were employed in the rear areas, to volunteer for front-line duty.

Commanders of all grades will receive voluntary applications for transfer to the Infantry and forward them to higher authority with recommendations for appropriate type of replacement. *This opportunity to volunteer will be extended to all soldiers without regard to color or race* In the event that the number of suitable negro [sic] volunteers exceeds the replacement needs of negro combat units, these men will be suitably incorporated in other organizations so that their service and their fighting spirit may be efficiently utilized.⁶²

Over 2,000 black soldiers volunteered—many taking a reduction in rank since the opportunity was restricted to E-1s and E-2s.⁶³

Because a strategic commander must influence a great number of people separated by great distances of geography and culture, he must be correspondingly more charismatic and stronger of personality than military leaders at lower echelons.⁶⁴

⁶¹Eisenhower, *Papers*, 3:1749-50.

⁶²Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2218.

⁶³Eisenhower, *Papers*, 4:2218.

⁶⁴FMFM 1-1, 82.

Ultimately, Eisenhower's moral authority flowed from his strong personality. People universally liked Eisenhower. He had an unusual personal charisma based on a disarming transparency and straightforward integrity. He was highly intelligent, mature beyond his years, articulate, photogenic, and possessed of supreme self-confidence—yet without arrogance. His winning ways with people were key to his ascendancy and success as strategic general.

In a postwar letter to his boyhood friend Edward E. "Swede" Hazlett, Eisenhower disclosed the standard by which he measured greatness. He said greatness depended on assuming "some position of great responsibility" and then discharging the duties "as to have left a marked and favorable imprint on the future."⁶⁵ By his own standard, Eisenhower was a truly great man. His unique contribution to the war, in the form of himself, was a dynamic and competent leader of unimpeachable personal integrity who was morally and professionally qualified to lead. His integrity enabled him to earn a high place of trust and responsibility from which he unified the western nations and led them in the campaigns that destroyed two fascist governments and liberated western Europe. He used his real authority, the force of his personality, and his physical presence to successfully impose his moral vision upon his subordinates and communicate it to his greater public audience. It was his moral leadership, more than any other quality, which

⁶⁵ Ambrose, 11.

held the Alliance together through the wartime trials of failure and success and which enhanced the security of the free world by building Anglo-American trust.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Genius is present in every age, but the men carrying it within them remain benumbed unless extraordinary events occur to heat up and melt the mass so that it flows forth.¹

Denis Diderot

Eisenhower's Genius

Eisenhower fought and won the war in Europe on his own terms. He designed his own chain of command. He drafted the terms and plans for Allied cooperation and strategy. He built the Allied command and control structure. He dealt directly with his heads of state and on occasion, disobeyed them. He engaged in military diplomacy with the Vichy French, the Soviets, and even the Nazis. He enforced his personal morality upon an entire theater of war. He integrated blacks within the Army. He was the field commander for four great campaigns including the first Allied effort in North Africa and the final drive from the English Channel to the Elbe. He even drafted the German surrender document. In his humble and disarming way, Eisenhower was the most unreasonable general of all time.

An Unreasonable Vision

Eisenhower was, above all, a progressive visionary. He was an unreasonable man in the best sense of the word—he did not conform to an imperfect world, but rather

¹Spanoudis, *Quotations*.

expected and persuaded the world around him to conform to his better vision. The abundant evidence for this quality has most commonly been misinterpreted as good fortune, optimism, and naivete. But, rather than being a serene and simple facilitator, Ike was a highly intelligent and passionate innovator who was constantly striving on behalf of some nascent cause. His genius can best be understood in terms of the truly rare gift of a macroscopic vision of the world and his place in it, which was broader than the more purely military focus of his contemporaries. This vision provided him with the strategic insight that became his hallmark.

Eisenhower's vision distinguished him as a kind of radical in his contemporary military culture. He succeeded, not by conforming, but by transcending the military norm. Eisenhower's innovative ways confounded more reasonable men. His unconventional thoughts were seen as radical enough in the conservative military culture of the day to warrant a court martial.² His vision for what *could be* disturbed those more comfortable with the status quo. His unflagging initiative in innovation, experimentation, and self-education prepared him for the extra-military responsibilities of unified command and gave him advantages in experience and perspective over men many years superior in military and combat service. His compelling vision was the most rare and therefore most important attribute which qualified Eisenhower to be a strategic general. Understanding his vision is the key to understanding his success.

²Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 173.

By 1941, Eisenhower had formed his own exhaustive and coherent strategic vision for the Army, national military strategy, and unified command. It was based on his in-depth study of military history including the Great War, personal investigation of emerging technology and tactics, his extensive experience as coach and instructor, and the personal influence of men like Pershing, Conner, and MacArthur. In his recommendation for Eisenhower's promotion following the Louisiana Maneuvers, General Krueger recognized the result of the extraordinary confluence of these shaping forces when he wrote that Eisenhower was "a man possessing broad vision, progressive ideas, a thorough grasp of the magnitude of the problems involved in handling an Army, and lots of initiative and resourcefulness."³ The military has more consistently rewarded competence and execution within one's lane of responsibility than the nebulous attributes of vision and progressive ideas. Krueger clearly understood that the temporary colonel serving as his chief of staff was gifted for some higher calling.

Eisenhower's vision had breadth. In Louisiana in 1941, he proved that he was able to hold within his mind a comprehensive picture of the operational and strategic circumstances of an army in the field. In Europe in 1944, he did the same for an Allied force consisting of six armies. Eisenhower's vision also had depth. He had a great ability to catalogue and sift data to find the few golden nuggets and tactical details with strategic implications. The historical record clearly shows how his superiors consistently relied on his lucid strategic synopses and decision papers. Eisenhower's vision also

³Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower, vol. 1, Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 127.

extended to political ramifications, and he had an unsurpassed instinct for finding methods which were feasible and acceptable to his superiors. He saw from the start that the outcome of the war would turn on seemingly unmilitary details like human relationships and economic productive potentials, and he consciously and consistently factored these into his strategic thinking. Above all, Eisenhower's vision had direction. He saw a clear path to winning the war and knew that the ways and means used to achieve that end would shape the postwar world for better or worse. He was able to persuade others to his cause and methods with a clear and convincing articulation of his vision.

A Creative Leader

Eisenhower's vision, in combination with his insuppressible initiative, synergistically produced the creativity that was his chief departure from the stereotypical military mind. Many American military officers in 1942 had professional knowledge and ability. Thousands could have trumped Eisenhower on seniority, high command responsibilities, and combat experience. However, Eisenhower's rare combination of macroscopic vision and indomitable initiative were unique. This combination of qualities led him to investigate and expand his breadth of education beyond that of his peers. It fueled his creative streak and led to prolific production and innovation above and beyond the scope of his job. It sustained him during the war as he suffered with chronic flu and lack of sleep while maintaining the murderous hours and man-killing travel schedule

required of a theater commander.⁴ It gave him the confidence to act independently and decisively beyond the bounds of his designated authority and to fill the power vacuums created when his bosses disagreed or were too removed from the problem at hand.

Eisenhower's strategic theories came to life by the virtue of his pen and personality. He translated his vision into concrete products: strategic synopses, point papers, and operational plans. He built the strategic framework for American cooperation with the British and personally initiated effective coordinated strategic planning between the two. He wrote the job description for the unified commander and sold the concept to the Alliance. He advocated close cooperation with the Soviets and a cross-channel attack to open a second front. He did the groundwork planning for what would eventually become Operation OVERLORD, the climactic campaign of the Western front.

As strategic leader, Eisenhower continued to conceive and midwife many novel and even controversial ideas. He was the single individual most responsible for building an enduring Anglo-American unity. He forged two seamless joint and combined military staffs of unprecedented scale in order to stretch his span of control to cover a theater of war. He gingerly bent such men as Churchill, Montgomery, Patton, and de Gaulle to his will. He resisted all attempts to elevate his position to that of a figurehead and maintained operational control of each campaign at his headquarters. He refused to let heads of state overrule his military decisions on any grounds other than political necessity. He fought and won a long struggle for control of the strategic air forces and

⁴Eisenhower, *Letters*, 9.

achieved a degree of coordination in joint warfighting that has never been equaled. For the sake of military efficiency and saving lives, he successfully walked political tightropes with the Vichy French, the Soviets, and even the Nazis without politically undermining his superiors.

It is the creative element that allows one to see the applications and consequences that derive from inevitable evolutions of technology and society. Francis Bacon once said, "He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator."⁵ Eisenhower avoided such pitfalls by his very nature. He spent his life as a perpetual student. He actively explored the latest developments in weapons and tactics and was always searching for a new and better way to do things. He vigorously promoted the exploitation of any development that offered the promise of an advantage over his enemy. Eisenhower did not wait for lessons to percolate from the bottom up, but took initiative to visit the front and the laboratory, find those lessons himself, adjust his vision accordingly, and then impose his new vision from the top down.

A Moral Leader

Eisenhower's vision also had a moral aspect. He wore the mantle of his command authority without the arrogance of men like Montgomery, Patton, Sir Alan Brooke, and de Gaulle. He was forthright, honorable, and unshakably loyal; and he set out to remake his subordinates in his own image. He envisioned a degree of Anglo-American unity that most military men of the age thought was unattainable, and he was

⁵Spanoudis, *Quotations*.

audacious enough to try to erase arrogance and national chauvinism from the vast military hierarchy of his staffs and subordinate commanders. Incredibly, he succeeded on all counts beyond any reasonable expectation.

His moral perception was rooted firmly in the present and uniquely unconstrained by historical prejudices. As a military diplomat, he dealt fairly with the Vichy French, the Soviets, and even the Nazis. As a military commander, he demanded fair treatment for his men regardless of rank or race. He frequently visited his men's fighting positions in the front and the rear to stay attuned to their sacrifices and needs and to bolster their morale.

Eisenhower saw the war as a noble crusade and fought it as such. The moral authority of his unimpeachable character transmitted through every handshake, every speech, every press release, and every radio address to the great audience of civilians and soldiers who were his constituents. Their mirrored confidence in his competence and impartiality resulted in a level of loyalty, unity, and support that is unequaled in coalition warfare.

Producing an Eisenhower

It must be the responsibility of current military leaders to identify those in every age who have Eisenhower's genius of creative vision and to provide the "extraordinary events" which will develop them into strategic leaders. While Eisenhower's capacity for vision was a rare gift, it was recognized and nurtured by the personal intervention of great men. Eisenhower's sound leadership and supreme self-confidence evolved during his

years of personal contact with men of the caliber to become Army Chiefs of Staff.

Eisenhower was the product of a chain of mentoring which began with Pershing and flowed on through his protégés Fox Conner, Douglas MacArthur, and George C. Marshall.

Eisenhower was only one of many exceptional leaders who emerged from the lean interwar years to fight World War II. The Army's incubation of such potent military leadership was a testament to a culture which not only allowed, but valued extraordinary personal involvement in the training of its future generations. Winston Churchill realized the magnitude of this achievement in an address he made in 1946.

That you should have been able to preserve the art of not only creating mighty armies almost at the stroke of a wand—but of leading and guiding those armies upon a scale incomparably greater than anything that was prepared for or even dreamed of, constitutes a gift made by the officer corps of the United States to their nation in time of trouble, which I earnestly hope will never be forgotten here.⁶

Unfortunately, part of the process that produced General Eisenhower *has* been forgotten. True mentoring has been replaced by impersonal formal schooling and a least-common-denominator approach to leadership development. Checklists of learning objectives have replaced paternal leadership and example. Aspiring leaders are directed to books rather than people to develop their skills. Gone is the meaningful personal contact between commander and subordinate, much less general officer to junior officer mentoring. Army values are now imprinted on plastic tags to be worn around soldiers'

⁶Spanoudis, *Quotations*.

necks, instead of being imprinted in their hearts by the influence and example of moral leaders.

None of today's military services have a mechanism, much less a pattern, of true mentoring. The egalitarian culture of the modern military has suppressed the kind of material contact across paygrades required for inspiration and education. For the masses, the Army has supplanted personal relationships and example with institutionalized leadership development programs of directed studies, which perpetuate mediocrity rather than cultivate excellence. For the few, there is still favoritism and patronage, but not mentoring. Thus, some accelerate the career of the standout or the well-connected officer without accelerating his development. Current military doctrine recognizes that leadership is not an innate quality, but a learned skill. However, it does not recognize that it is an art learned by personal contact and example, as well as a science learned in the classroom. It took both to create an Eisenhower.

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